

JUDAISM

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"JEWISH SURVIVAL" AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Jakob J. Petuchowski

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Haim Chertok

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication among Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

First Reader

Why Jewish Survival?

The frequently heard phrase, "Jewish survival," is ambiguous because it is applied, at times, to the physical survival of the Jewish group, at others to the preservation of the religio-cultural heritage of Judaism, and often to a hazy admixture of both. As a consequence, it is frequently maintained that anti-Semitism is the most important driving-force behind the creation of Jewish loyalty and the preservation of Judaism.

In "Jewish Survival and Anti-Semitism," *Jakob J. Petuchowski* calls for greater clarity in the use of the words. He asks for a recognition of the intrinsic values of Judaism which make it impervious to anti-Semitism and worth preserving on its own terms and for its own sake.

How Do We See God?

There is an inherent paradox — some would say an insuperable difficulty — at the root of all theological discussion: the effort to comprehend the nature of God with the limited tools of human understanding and human language.

In his paper, "The Judaic View of God," *Abraham Kaplan* contrasts the anthropomorphism and anthropopathism of rabbinic Aggadah with the austere philosophizing of the great medieval Jewish thinkers, in order to arrive at an acceptable Jewish view of God.

A Modern "I Believe"

Many definitions as to what it means to be a Jew are being proposed today. However, with the general atrophy of the ethical conscience in our time, these definitions rarely include a sense of moral concern going beyond one's own particular group. All the more welcome is the brief statement, "Credo: I Am A Jew," by the contemporary poet, *David Sparenberg*.

When the Messiah Comes

It is a truism — but no less true on that account — that Judaism is a “this-worldly” religion, emphasizing man’s activity during his earthly existence rather than his destiny thereafter. Nonetheless, the hopes and fears of all human beings with regard to their fate after death also play an important role in Jewish religion. A variety of terms occur in rabbinic sources, not generally differentiated one from the other: *olam haba*, *yemot hamashiah* and *tehiyat hametim*. They are widely familiar because of the Sabbath morning service in which they all occur.

Maimonides, with his genius for systematization, dealt with this area of human concern and created an organized pattern for interpreting these terms. The exposition by Aryeh Botwinick of “Maimonides’ Messianic Age” is a significant contribution toward the understanding of the Jewish conception of the hereafter.

Choose A Healthy Climate

Few areas in the study of the history of ideas are as interesting as inter-cultural contacts between different societies. *Stephen Newmyer*, who is himself non-Jewish, became interested in the inter-relationship of Rabbinic and Hellenistic culture. His paper, “Climate and Health: Classical and Talmudic Perspectives,” treats of the influence of Greek medicine on Talmudic law and thought. It also indicates several areas in which the Rabbis seem to have broken new ground.

Miracles Do Happen

Miracles have played an important part in all religions. While it may be argued that they are less central to the world view of Judaism than to Christianity, their significance in Jewish belief cannot be gainsaid. Because of their importance in religious tradition, miracles have also proved to be a problem for believers. These issues are discussed by *Ruth Birnbaum* in her paper, “The Polemic on Miracles.”

The Importance of Lovingkindness

One of the most persistent criticisms of normative Judaism through the ages has been the charge of “legalism,” an alleged preoccupation with the strict letter of the law rather than a concern for the welfare and happiness of human beings.

It is often overlooked that integral to the system of *halakhah* itself is the obligation to perform acts *lifnim mishurat hadin*, “acts beyond the line of duty.” In fact, one of the most famous apothegms on the nature of Judaism, going back to Simon the Just, declares, “Upon three things the world stands, upon Torah — study, upon *Abodah* — religious worship, and upon *Gemilut Hasadim* — the practice of lovingkindness.”

The content and the implication of this last named virtue are discussed by *Jack D. Spiro*, in "An Exploration of *Gemilut Hasadim*."

Another Aspect of Abraham

Long before Kierkegaard dubbed father Abraham "the knight of faith," the first patriarch was regarded as a prototype of deep faith in God and of magnanimity toward one's fellow men. This is a view for which the Bible offers substantial warrant. However, another interpretation of his character and spirit is offered by *Haim Chertok* in his paper, "The Life and Death of Abram, the Doubter," in which he underscores the elements of doubt in Abraham's relationship to God. He thus exhibits the polarity that is part of any profound religious commitment.

He Whom God Loves . . .

Of all the issues confronting human existence, the most pervasive and tragic is the problem of evil in general and human suffering in particular. In his paper, "A Talmudic Discussion on *Yissurin Shel Ahavah*," *Joel B. Wolowelsky* discusses one special class of human suffering which the rabbis of the Talmud have called "chastisements of God's love." All forms of human suffering that could not be justified on any of the human grounds available were assigned to this category. Maimonides, with his penchant for logical thought, denies that *yissurin shel ahavah* has any biblical basis. This is all the more striking since there is a passage in Proverbs that could have served his purpose, 3:12: "He whom God loves, He chastises."

The present essay is not concerned with these fundamental issues in theology. Instead, the author has chosen to present an engaging, deeply human interpretation of a Talmudic passage detailing the Rabbis' use of the concept of "chastisements of love."

God as Artist

No complete "answers" will ever be forthcoming to the question of God's justice, but various insights may shed light upon one or another aspect of the problem and, to that degree, make the issue less painful to confront.

In his essay, "Portrait of God as a Young Artist: The Flood Revisited," *Byron L. Sherwin* offers an appealing interpretation of God as an artist who, in the process of creation, will produce imperfect and unsatisfactory prototypes that He discards as the work progresses. The theme of God as artist is to be found in Hindu thought, rather than in Judaism. Nonetheless, the rabbis do speak of God creating worlds and destroying them time and again before the present universe came into existence.

What Form Will Salvation Take?

One cause may have many effects. The rigors of life in Russia at the beginning of this century led to the intensification of the Zionist ideal, on the one hand, with its goal of improving the lot of the Jews elsewhere in their own homeland, and, on the other hand, to the creation of a socialist movement, the Bund, which was concerned with improving the lot of Jews, as Russians, in Russia. The differences of opinion continued through the years and the Bund is still heard from occasionally.

Some of the interesting highlights of the differences between the two movements appear in the paper by *Leonard Bloom*, "The Bund and the Zionist Movement in the Early Years."

There Are Differences in Time

One of the most distinguished students of religion in our century is the Roumanian-American scholar, *Mircea Eliade*, of the University of Chicago. A basic element in his theory of religion is the concept of "sacred time," which is radically different from the ordinary profane time which we encounter in our daily experience, and which existed at the beginning of creation. According to *Eliade*, the holy days of all religions, both primitive and advanced, represent the re-enactment of sacred time.

In his paper, "Mircea Eliade and the Jewish Holy Day," *Aryeh Wine-man* interprets the fall festivals — Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Succot — in the light of *Eliade's* theory. He also notes how the Israeli educator and thinker, *Yosef Schechter*, utilizes this approach in interpreting the deeper meaning of the holidays.

Political and Military Foresight and Hindsight

The sharp divergence of opinion with regard to the military and political policies of the present Israeli government is reflected in a review essay by *Joseph P. Sternstein* on the book, *The Bar Kokhba Syndrome*, by *Yehoshafat Harkabi*. The author of the book analyzes the tragedy and the failure of the heroic Bar Kokhba rebellion over eighteen centuries ago, and he maintains that a similar type of misguided patriotism actuates the Begin-Shamir administration. Rabbi *Sternstein* finds *Harkabi's* position open to question on many grounds and strongly supports the essential rightness of present Israeli policies.

R.G.

“Jewish Survival” and Anti-Semitism

JAKOB J. PETUCHOWSKI

I

“JEWISH SURVIVAL” IS AN EMOTIONALLY charged phrase which contains a number of different levels of meaning. It is often invoked as the goal and objective for a variety of — occasionally conflicting — courses of action. It is also more often than not taken for granted that the value of “Jewish survival” is self-evident.

Thus, whereas, in the past, the underlying reason for the observance of Jewish customs and ceremonies was the belief that God had commanded them, some modern Jewish thinkers, less certain about the divine origin of Scriptural and Rabbinical enactments, tend to recommend Jewish ceremonial observance on the basis of its supposed “survival value.” A number of American Reform rabbis, willing to “officiate” at wedding ceremonies involving an (unconverted) non-Jewish partner, justify their disregard of traditional Jewish marriage law by claiming that they thereby “save the Jewish partner for Judaism,” thus enhancing the prospects for “Jewish survival.” Some fringe-groups of Reform Judaism, which have dispensed with the belief in God, claim to serve the cause of “Jewish survival” by providing a meeting-ground for Jews who consider themselves to be too sophisticated to share their ancestors’ beliefs.

Zionists, who regard Jewish existence in the Diaspora as “abnormal,” and who see nothing but gloom and doom on the Diaspora horizon, insist that the “full Jewish life,” a prerequisite for “Jewish survival,” can be lived only in the State of Israel. At the same time, there are Jews who find that “Jewish survival” is threatened by mixed marriages and by other departures from Orthodox codifications of Jewish religious practice. And there are the Orthodox Jews of the *Natoré Kartha* persuasion who feel that “Jewish survival” is threatened by Zionism in general, and by the State of Israel in particular.

What it all amounts to is an assertion which, were it to be spelled out fully, would say: “Only *my* prescription, and nobody else’s will assure the Jewish future!”

On a very basic level, “Jewish survival” obviously connotes the physical, biological survival of human beings who, for one reason or

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another, are known as Jews — irrespective of their own commitment or otherwise to something known as “Judaism.” Six million of such people did *not* survive in Nazi Europe. Eleven hundred thousand of such people perished when the Second Jewish Commonwealth was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 C.E., according to the estimate of an eye-witness, the historian Flavius Josephus.¹ Countless others, known as Jews, did not survive the persecutions between the first century and the twentieth.

Jewish life has often been threatened in the course of history, and various stratagems have been devised and applied in order to survive on a purely physical, biological level. In the second century B.C.E., when the Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes, proscribed the exercise of the Jewish religion in the Second Jewish Commonwealth, many Jews sought to save their lives by complying with that proscription. How many, we do not know. But we do know that those who gathered around Judas Maccabeus in defiance of the royal edict (and who were ultimately responsible for the institution of the Feast of Hanukkah) were a distinct *minority* among the Palestinian Jews of that time. “You have delivered the many into the hand of the few,” proclaims the *ʔal hanissim* prayer in the Hanukkah liturgy. The “many,” we may infer, preferred physical survival without Judaism to a martyr’s death for keeping the faith.

While, needless to say, no exact statistics are available, it has been estimated that, in 1492, when the Jews of Spain were given the option of converting to Christianity or leaving the country, well over 30,000 Jewish families left, while some 10,000 families converted to Christianity and stayed behind.² That would mean that about one quarter of Spanish Jewry exchanged their Jewish loyalties for the opportunity of “surviving” on Spanish soil. That would be comparable to the defection of one and a half million Jews out of the estimated figure of some six million Jews who are supposed to be living in the United States today.

But that is not all. Prior to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, many Spanish Jews had already converted to Christianity during a number of years when the persecution of the Jews had increased. In the twelve years *before* the Edict of Expulsion, the Inquisition had discovered about 13,000 Jewish converts to Christianity, whom it accused, rightly or wrongly, of secret attachments to Judaism.³ And that, of course, does not tell us anything at all about those converts who were *not* caught by the Inquisition, many of whom might not have retained any secret attachments to Judaism.

Nor was defection from Judaism confined to the Hispanic realm. While Ashkenazi Jewry can look back upon a long line of martyrs who

1. Flavius Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* VI, 9, iii.

2. Cf. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. XI. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967), p. 240; and cf. Note #61 on pp. 404f.

3. Cf. Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, Vol. II. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966), p. 424.

died "for the sanctification of the Name of God," it also produced its occasional apostates — some of whom tried to outdo one another in their hatred of, and in their attacks upon, their former Jewish coreligionists. Those were converts to Christianity. Jewish history also records the names of Jewish defectors to Islam.

Many, if not most, of those conversions took place under duress (which still means that those who underwent them preferred physical survival as non-Jews to death as Jews). Other conversions took place because of genuine religious conviction. The latter needs stressing, for Jews seldom lend credence to reports that any of their number converted to another religion because they really believed in it. Yet if we are ready to concede that, but for his religious experience on the Day of Atonement 1913, a Franz Rosenzweig *might* have converted to Christianity out of genuine religious conviction, we must be prepared to make a similar allowance in any number of other cases as well. But this does not exclude the likelihood that most Jews who left their ancestral faith did so because they felt that it was easier to "survive" as a member of the majority than as a member of a minority which, more often than not, suffered greater or lesser civil disabilities.

With this consideration, we have added to the factor of bare *physical* "survival" the further motivation of *economic* "survival," of "making one's way in the world." Those who took the step out of Judaism because they were impelled by such considerations obviously no longer considered Judaism to be important enough to impede their economic progress. Some, like the poet, Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), submitted to Christian baptism as their "entrance ticket to European culture." The *Jewish Encyclopedia* provides a list of no less than 103 "prominent" Jewish converts to Christianity. The list is restricted to the *modern period* and to *prominent* converts; and it does not include the "prominent converts" who were still living in 1903!⁴

Nor should we overlook the attempt to escape the effects of anti-Semitism, upon oneself and upon one's children, as a cause of defections from Judaism — a cause which is clearly one of human "survival." After all, none other than Theodor Herzl himself, before he "discovered" Zionism as the "solution of the Jewish Problem," had, at one time, proposed the mass conversion of Jews to Christianity as the most effective way of abolishing anti-Semitism!⁵

II

The data we have thus far adduced applied to periods and environments which offered conversion to Christianity (or Islam) as practically

4. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, p. 253. Cf. Guido Kisch, *Judentaufen* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1973), pp. 6-21, for references to the relevant literature.

5. Cf. Alexander Bein, art. "Herzl, Theodor," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 8, col. 408.

the only way in which one was able to shed one's Jewish identity. In the more secular modern state, conversion to Christianity is no longer the only available option. It is possible now simply to shun affiliation with the organized Jewish community in any of its manifestations. There is no telling how many such ex-Jews live in the United States. For the Federal Republic of Germany we at least have some estimates. In 1979, there were 27,379 registered members of the Jewish community in the Federal Republic of Germany. At the same time, it was estimated that Jews living in the Federal Republic of Germany *without* being registered as members of the Jewish community numbered between 10,000 and 15,000 — that is, from between one third to one half as many as identified themselves as Jews by affiliation.⁶

Those ten to fifteen thousand unaffiliated Jews in post-War West Germany are a perfectly understandable phenomenon. They include survivors of concentration camps and people who have spent the war years in hiding. They are people who now refuse to subject themselves, even potentially, once more to the cruel fate they had suffered in the National Socialist period. Obviously, they must also be people whose ties to the Jewish heritage have become extremely tenuous or non-existent, and who feel no need to worship God in a synagogue — if they believe in God at all. The well organized European Jewish communities in the pre-War period, with their up-to-date lists of members, had unwittingly contributed to the thoroughness of the Nazi round-up of Jews. Some of the people who today refuse to be included in any official Jewish membership list are simply taking the precaution of making it that much harder to find them — just in case it might occur to some anti-Semitic activists to “go looking for the Jews” again.

The unaffiliated Jews cannot, of course, be sure that their strategy will work if worst should come to the worst. The National Socialists, after all, were quite capable of ferreting out good Christians of Jewish descent — as long as those Christians' grandparents had been known as Jews. But it cannot be gainsaid that an individual of Jewish descent, both in Germany and elsewhere, might very well succeed today in totally merging into his/her environment — without leaving any “Jewish traces.” Moreover, an *individual* might succeed even where a whole *group* would not have the slightest chance. Herzl's original scheme of a *mass* conversion of Jews to Christianity would have been doomed to failure even if he had succeeded in convincing all the Jews to undergo baptism — just as the “New Christians,” in medieval Spain, were too large a group and too identifiable to make the Inquisition look the other way. However, the case of an individual is different.

6. Friedo Sachser, “Federal Republic of Germany,” in *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 79 (1979), p. 246.

III

We have looked at some of the ways in which individuals, known as Jews, have sought to rid themselves, throughout the centuries, of what they must have regarded as the handicap of their "Jewishness," in order to "survive" under adverse conditions — to survive physically and biologically, and to survive and to advance economically and professionally. Some of them, perhaps even many of them, have succeeded. Their "Judaism" did not survive, but they themselves did. For the physical survival of people whose parents happen to have been Jews and spiritual "Jewish survival," in the sense of perpetuating something called "Judaism" or "Jewishness," are *not* identical. The latter, as we shall have occasion to see, does, to some extent, depend upon the former. But the former does not necessarily imply the latter.

There is a tendency today to lose sight of that fact, if not indeed to suppress it altogether. "Jewish survival" is often juxtaposed to the destruction of European Jewry. Obviously, six million people, known as Jews, did *not* survive in Europe. Obviously, too, people alive today do not relish the prospect of being done to death like European Jewry. Instead, they want to live, to *survive* — on the simply physical, biological level, and also on the economic level. And they want their children to live and to survive. This is a natural, a human desire. It has nothing to do with any specific *Jewish* loyalties and commitments.

Yet the advocates of various programs for "Jewish survival" have something quite different in mind. They want Jews to survive as an ethnic entity, or as bearers of a distinct religious tradition, or as a sociological group, or as a combination of two or more of those definitions. In the minds of their listeners, they now plant the following chain of thought: "Six million Jews in Europe did not survive. I am a Jew, and I do want to survive. Here I am offered a program of 'Jewish survival.' Perhaps I should give serious consideration to this program. It certainly seems to merit my generous financial support." The Jewish fund-raising establishment in the United States has been notably successful in implanting that chain of thought in the mind of numerous people of Jewish descent who may not have the slightest interest in, or commitment to, Jewish nationalism, so-called Jewish culture, or Jewish belief and observance.

It is the exceptional person like the late author, Arthur Koestler, who would approach this problem from an entirely different perspective. At one time, he argued, religion held the Jews together. But the day of religion is over. Personally he felt no attachment to something called "Jewish culture," nor did he feel himself a part of any "Jewish nation." He had, indeed, done his share in getting the European Jewish refugees settled in Palestine, and in getting the State of Israel established for them. But now that the State of Israel exists, let those who feel themselves to be a part of the "Jewish nation" go and settle there, seeing that the "nation" had

acquired its own territory. But those who, like Koestler himself, do not hear the call of Zion should attempt to assimilate to their environments as quickly and as totally as possible. Why perpetuate the handicap of Jewishness any longer than necessary?⁷

That Koestler's proposal did not meet with an enthusiastic reception on the part of the Jewish Establishment is no cause for surprise. But some Jews may very well have taken Koestler's advice. Others may have arrived at the same conclusion without Arthur Koestler's prompting. The fact that there are no reliable statistics available about those who have taken Koestler's option would tend to show that this option can at least be partially successful — as, indeed, it always was. And many more might choose this option, once they begin to understand that the survival of Jews as human beings is not necessarily identical with what certain interested parties, religious, cultural, Zionist, etc., mean when *they* speak of "Jewish survival." It might even occur to some that, under certain circumstances, people now known as Jews could survive much more easily without the encumbrances of a Jewish "cause."

IV

If individuals, known as Jews, were, and are, able to survive as human beings by shedding their Jewish affiliation, thus demonstrating that the phrase, "Jewish survival," is somewhat ambiguous, it is nevertheless true that Judaism itself, however it be defined, could not survive without the survival of people who consciously choose to identify themselves as Jews. Here, then, is the nexus between something called "Judaism" or "Jewishness," on the one hand, and living, surviving human beings, known as "Jews," on the other. It is that nexus, and it alone, which invests the concept of "Jewish survival" with a realistic meaning. It is obvious that the conscious choice to survive *as a Jew*, and not simply as a human being, implies that one sees something of value in Judaism or in "Jewishness" which overrides the inconveniences, the disabilities, and even the dangers to which one might be exposed as a Jew in a non-Jewish world. It follows that not everyone born as a Jew, when given the choice, and that choice is increasingly given in a secular society, would necessarily opt for "Jewish survival."

Moreover, the value which one sees in identifying as a Jew may be no more than a sense of *noblesse oblige*. The French philosopher, Henri Bergson (1859-1941), may dramatize this *noblesse oblige* for us. On February 8th, 1937, he wrote:

My thoughts have led me ever closer to Catholicism. I see in it the completion of Judaism. I would have converted to Catholicism, had I not seen how, for years now, . . . the terrible wave of anti-Semitism has been making ready

7. Cf. Harold Harel Fisch, art. "Koestler, Arthur," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 10, cols. 1132-1133.

to roll over the earth. I wanted to remain among those who will be persecuted to-morrow. But I hope that, if the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris grants his permission, a Catholic priest will recite the prayers for the dead at my funeral. Should this permission be withheld, I request that a rabbi be invited, without, however, concealing from him my moral-spiritual attachment to Catholicism. He should also be told that my first choice had been to have a Catholic priest at my bier.⁸

There was something truly noble in Bergson's posture; and, to the end, he shared the fate of his fellow-Jews in Vichy France. But he had also quite obviously acknowledged the superiority of Catholicism; and, had it not been for his noble desire to be among the persecuted, he would clearly have dissociated himself completely from the Jewish community. In other words, had there been no threat of anti-Semitism, Bergson would have converted to Catholicism. As a motivation for "Jewish survival," Bergson's *noblesse oblige* holds little promise.

But if there was a certain spiritual grandeur and moral nobility in Bergson's desire to share the fate of the persecuted, there seems to be an overriding element of *spite* in Emil L. Fackenheim's prescription for "Jewish survival." Because the National Socialists wanted to destroy all Jews, Fackenheim argues, *therefore* all Jews today must insist upon surviving as Jews. Otherwise they would be "handing Hitler yet another posthumous victory." This is what Fackenheim calls, "the 614th commandment."⁹ He seems to be unaware of the fact that the same logic could also lead one to the following quite different conclusions:

(a) Hitler wanted to make Germany *judenrein* (free of Jews). If, therefore, large numbers of Jews do not settle in Germany today, they would be handing Hitler yet another, posthumous victory.

(b) Hitler insisted that the Jews are a "foreign nation" living in various "host countries." Unless, therefore, Jews emphatically deny that this is how they perceive themselves, and Zionists would be quite unable to make that denial, then they would be "handing Hitler yet another, posthumous victory."

Fackenheim's particular prescription is predicated upon his concept of "the commanding voice of Auschwitz," to which he ascribes as much validity and authority as he does to the "commanding voice of Sinai." But the "commanding" character of the "voice of Auschwitz" is by no means self-evident. To survive as Jews in order to deprive Hitler of a posthumous victory may be enough of a motivation for "Jewish survival" to appeal to those who actually did survive the concentration camps, as well as to those who survived the war years at a safe distance from Hitler's Europe — and are now suffering from guilt feelings just because they survived.

8. Quoted in Kisch, *Op. cit.*, p. 118 (our English translation).

9. Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return into History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), pp. 19-24.

Yet it would be difficult to imagine a Jewish father, fifty years from now, admonishing his children in words to the following effect: "You must survive as Jews, because, almost a century ago, a wicked man in Germany set out to exterminate all Jews, and he almost succeeded. If you do not survive as Jews, you will be handing that wicked man yet another, posthumous victory." That is to say, it would be difficult to imagine, if the memory of Auschwitz were the *only* "Jewish content" of that family's life. Even such a family, however, must be reckoned with, seeing that Fackenheim claims that the agnostic is as much addressed by the "commanding voice of Auschwitz" as is the religious Jew. It follows, then, that religion need not necessarily be a component of the "Jewishness" of those who are bidden to engage in "Jewish survival."

Something else is. Fackenheim is an enthusiastic champion of the State of Israel and of a Diaspora-denying philosophy of Zionism. He would withhold the right to claim "Jewish authenticity" to those Diaspora Jews who would not place the State of Israel at the very center of their Jewish living and striving. For, according to Fackenheim, the State of Israel is *the* Jewish answer to Auschwitz. And who could possibly wish to refuse sharing in that answer, and still lay claim to Jewish authenticity?

Bergson's and Fackenheim's approaches to "Jewish survival" differ considerably. What they both have in common, however, is that Bergson, in his personal decision, and Fackenheim, in his prescription for all Jews, are reacting to the fact of anti-Semitism. They are by no means the only ones who have seen in the reaction to anti-Semitism the driving power of Jewish life.

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana, a third-century Palestinian Amora, commenting on Esther 3:10-11, which tells us about Ahasuerus' taking off his signet ring and handing it over to Haman, thus enabling Haman to seal the edict of the destruction of the Jews, made the following remark:

Greater is the taking off of a signet ring than the forty-eight prophets and the seven prophetesses who prophesied in Israel. For all the prophets did not succeed in turning Israel towards improvement. But the taking off of the signet ring did turn them towards improvement.¹⁰

Rashi, the eleventh-century Bible and Talmud commentator, found that "improvement" indicated by the fast-days expressing repentance, which are mentioned in Esther 4:3: "fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes."¹¹

What the third-century Amora expressed in his picturesque language was expressed much more prosaically by the twentieth-century French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, who declared: "The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew. . . . (It) is the anti-Semite who *makes* the Jew."¹² And again: "(The) Jews have neither community of interests nor

10. B. *Megillah* 14a.

11. Rashi *ad b. Megillah* 14a.

community of beliefs. . . . The sole tie that binds them is the hostility and disdain of the societies which surround them."¹³

Nor should it be surprising that Theodor Herzl himself — who had first proposed a Jewish mass conversion to Christianity and only then the idea of a Jewish State — was frank enough to admit that his espousal of Jewish nationalism was in no small measure a consequence of his perception of anti-Semitism. Thus he wrote, in 1896, in his programmatic pamphlet, *The Jewish State*:

Only outside pressure pushes us again towards the old tribe; only the hatred which our environment bears against us makes us into aliens again.¹⁴

V

The sociological observations of Abba bar Kahana, of Sartre, and of Herzl are not without their validity — even though each one of them may have overlooked some other factors which also made for the will to survive as Jews. Those observations, however, can become quite dangerous if they lead some Jews into the temptation of thinking that "just a little bit of anti-Semitism" is required to facilitate the "survival" of their particular brand of "Jewishness," be it religious, ethnic, national or cultural. And, perhaps, not always "just a little bit." In this connection, one thinks of the gloating which one can occasionally hear or read in the State of Israel about reported anti-Semitic incidents in the Diaspora. One remembers how certain Orthodox Jewish circles in Germany "welcomed" the notorious "Nuremberg Laws," which, among other things (which were *not* welcomed quite as enthusiastically), prohibited marriages between Jews and "Aryans." Those who did not voluntarily listen to God's word, prohibiting mixed marriages, so the reaction went, are now compelled to do so by the law of the National Socialist state! And one recalls the fierce opposition by some leading nineteenth-century rabbis to the Emancipation of the Jews, seeing how successfully ghettoization had facilitated the maintenance of the traditional "piety of the environment," including the autonomy of the rabbinate.

Above all, however, the reliance upon anti-Semitism as a motivation for "Jewish survival" would seem to demonstrate the poverty of Judaism itself. Such a reliance is, in fact, tantamount to a declaration of Judaism's spiritual emptiness, and of its inability to shape the thoughts and the lives of free men and free women. If, in a free society, people known as Jews are indeed to "survive" *as Jews*, Judaism will have to do much better than that. It will have to rely on its *intrinsic* appeal — without attempting to thrive on the opposition, already existing or yet to be aroused, of the non-

12. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Jewish Year Book, Vol. 79

13. Sartre, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

14. Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, 11th edition (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1936), p. 30 (our English translation).

Jewish world. A State of Israel which seeks its own security by making Diaspora Jews feel insecure will, in the long run, elicit as little enthusiasm among free Jewish citizens of a free society as will a form of religious Judaism which can “survive” only to the extent to which it artificially re-creates the social segregation which was characteristic of medieval Ghetto existence.

Judaism, after all, began as the faith and the way of life of a people but recently redeemed from Egyptian slavery. It was the act of liberation, not the memory of enslavement, which led to its unique perception of the Deity — a fact already realized by the *Mekhilla*, when it taught that Israel’s view of God had been obscured by the bricklaying which the Israelites were forced to undertake, and that Israel attained unto a clearer vision of God only after the liberation.¹⁵ This, of course, does not mean that the God of Israel is inaccessible to His suffering children. On the contrary, many are the passages in both biblical and Rabbinic literature which stress precisely this accessibility. But it does make the point that freedom offers its own opportunities for the unfolding of Jewish religious life.

The great spiritual and intellectual achievements of Jewish communities living in relative freedom, such as Alexandrian Jewry in antiquity, Spanish Jewry in the Muslim Middle Ages, and German Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, have not lost their lustre just because those various external settings ended in tragedy. They all produced philosophies of Judaism which integrated into an over-all Jewish outlook the best which those various environments had to offer by way of intellectual, cultural and ethical stimulation. A Rabbi Shem Tov ben Isaac Arduziel, who lived in Carrión de los Condes, Northern Spain, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, was not only a synagogal poet whose work lives on in the Sepharadi liturgy to this day; he was also the Santob de Carrión who is still celebrated in Spain as one of the creative pioneers of Spanish literature. It would be hard to think of him as seeing in anti-Semitism his motivation for carrying on as a Jew.

Judaism has something to say about God. It has something to say about the existential human condition and about the relationship which obtains between God and God’s human children. Judaism also has certain ideas to offer about the way in which human beings are to relate to one another, and about the direction in which humankind is meant to move. It has certain quite definite notions about the use to which human intelligence is to be put, and it presents us with various concepts of Revelation which do not commit Jews to a literalist Fundamentalism.

That this Judaism has been able to “survive” in conditions of dire adversity, can only move us to great admiration. That conditions of dire adversity, however, are not a *sine qua non* for the survival of Judaism has

15. *Mekhilla, Pisha*, ch. 14, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 51; cf. *Siphre ad Numeros, pisqa* 84, ed. Horovitz, p. 82.

been amply demonstrated by the flourishing Jewish life of those Jewish communities in the past who lived in relative freedom.

But for American Jews, freedom is no longer relative. In a pluralistic society, based upon voluntarism in religious affiliations, freedom is absolute. American Jews have barely begun to think through the full implications of their unprecedented position in Jewish history.

The challenge of "Jewish Survival *without* Anti-Semitism" would seem to be one which is still awaiting our most serious attention.

Abel

SARAH SINGER

I do not understand his eyes
Nor why my brother Cain defies

And shuns his kin; why rages twist
Until his hand becomes a fist.

I gather wood for the harvest rite,
Hear my brother curse the light

That reddens mound and altar stones.
Cain grips his knife, and hones and hones.

SARAH SINGER *has won many awards for her poetry, which has been widely published.*

The Judaic View of God

ABRAHAM KAPLAN

I

ANALYSIS OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES MAKES UP a considerable part of traditional theology. Judaism follows the *via negativa*, denying characterizations of God rather than affirming what attributes He does have. Widely known in the West, this is also the theology of the Hindu Upanishads, with its *neti neti* — "Not this, not this!" "The negative attributes," says Joseph ibn Pakuda Bahya, "are more true in regard to God than the positive attributes."¹ According to Maimonides, "Every time you establish by proof the negation of a thing in reference to God, you become more perfect; while with every additional positive assertion you follow your imagination and recede from the true knowledge of God."² Similar views are expressed by Saadiah Gaon and Yehuda Halevi.

Affirming distinct attributes of God is thought to compromise the cardinal tenet of God's unity and His being outside of time. In Kabbalism, attributes are hypostatized or else construed as "stages in an intradivine life-process."³ As against Maimonides, Levi Gersonides argues that ascription of positive attributes to God is quite compatible with His unity, a position also taken by Hasdai Crescas and Joseph Albo. Ibn Gavirol writes (*Royal Crown* 11 C), "There is no distinction between Thy divinity, Thy unity, Thy eternity, and Thy existence; it is all one mystery."

For Maimonides, the issue whether God's attributes can be known is resolved by the doctrine that "God is identical with His attributes, so that it may be said that He is the knowledge, the knower and the known" (*Code* II 10). To speak of God's attributes, he maintains (*Guide* I 54), is not to imply that God has any qualities distinct from His being; at most, they are attributes of His acts. They do not even characterize His acts but only the human emotions evoked by them. Here Maimonides was anticipated by Yehuda Halevi, for whom the predicates associated with the Names of God "derived from the way His creatures are affected by His decrees and measures."⁴

The traditional Judaic attributes of God are that He is one; omni-

1. *Duties of the Heart*, I, 10.

2. *Guide of the Perplexed*, ed. Shlomo Pines (University of Chicago, 1963), I, 59.

3. Gerschom G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (Schocken, 1969), p. 94.

4. Yehuda Halevi, *The Kuzari*, ed. Isaak Heinemann (Meridian, 1960), II, 1; IV, 1-3.

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present and eternal; purely spiritual, both in the sense of having thought as an attribute (Spinoza, *Ethics* I 1) and as being incorporeal. Scripture reminds us, "You heard the voice of words, but you saw no form" (Deut. 4:12). Article Three of Maimonides' Creed runs: "The Creator . . . is not a body, is free from all properties of matter, and has no form whatever."

God is omnipotent, the Creator of heaven and earth. He is the author of natural law and of moral law; a Person, revealing His will and hearing prayer; omniscient, especially with regard to man's actions; a just Judge and a loving Providence; He is benevolent and merciful, faithful and true.

God is inclusive of all existence. The *Zohar*⁵ and the *Midrash*⁶ note that He is called "Truth," the Hebrew word for which consists of the first, middle and last letters of the alphabet — like "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last, the beginning and the end" in the last chapter of the book of Revelation. Another appellative of God, "*Makom*," means literally "place." "God is called '*Makom*'", Philo explains (*Dreams* I 11), "because He contains and is not contained, He is a place for all to flee to, and He is Himself the space which holds Him." Spinoza says straightforwardly (*Ethics* I 15), "Whatsoever is, is in God."

In the seventeenth century, the Cambridge Platonists identified God with space, a view which influenced Newton's physics. Judaism does not make that identification, for God transcends every dimension of physical existence, but holds that God is, indeed, the locus of all existence. "God, surrounding all things, is not Himself surrounded," says Philo (*Allegories* I 14, III 17). In the *Midrash* (*Gen R* 69:9) we have, "God is the world's place, not the world God's place."

Kabbalah makes frequent use of *gematria*, a method of interpretation which computes the numerical value of the letters making up the word being interpreted (the Hebrew alphabet is a system like the Roman numerals), then seeks other words of the same numerical value. Typical is the finding that the numerical value of "*Makom*" is equal to the sum of the squares of the letters of "*YHVH*," a circumstance which is taken to reveal an occult equivalence between the two. Such number magic is not far from the argument by Gottfried von Leibnitz, the inventor of the calculus, that dyadic arithmetic — the computer language in which all numbers can be expressed by strings of zeros and ones — shows how God, who is Unity, acting on Nothing, could produce the whole of finite creation.

God is omnipresent, especially in His manifestation as the *Shekhinah*. "The *Shekhinah* is everywhere," says the Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 25 a). "There is no place without the *Shekhinah*" (*Exod R* 2:9). In Judaism the

5. *The Zohar*, ed. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (Soncino, 1956), 5 vols.; I, 2b.

6. *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (Soncino, 1961), 10 vols.; *Deut. R* 1:10.

significance of this attribute is not metaphysical but moral: "No sin, however done in secrecy and in darkness, can escape the eye of Him who fills heaven and earth."⁷ Wherever we are, God's dominion compels us and His Providence sustains us. There is no land that God forgot, "somewheres east of Suez, where the best is like the worst, where there ain't no Ten Commandments, an' a man can raise a thirst."

God is present in all time as in all space: "From everlasting to everlasting You are God" (Psalms 90:2). Judaism has no conception of a dying god — like Tammuz, Ba'al and Adonis — and no god who is resurrected — like Osiris, Jesus and Odin. "Moses conceived the Deity as a Being Who has always existed, does exist, and always will exist," Spinoza says, (*Theologico-Political Treatise* II), "and he therefore called Him Jehovah, which in Hebrew signifies these three phases." Spinoza himself regards eternity as the very essence of God (*Ethics* V 30).

Eternal is not to be confused with everlasting; it is outside of time rather than enduring throughout all time. God is that in which time exists, not something taking place in time, even in all time. God is, therefore, unchanging. Says the Psalmist: The earth and the heavens "will perish, but You endure. They will wear out like a garment. You will change them like clothing, and they will pass away. But You remain the same . . ." (Psalm 102: 6-8). Being outside the receptacle and the nurse of all generation, the Judaic God has no history. Judaism provides no biography of God, even in myth. There is a sequence in God's act of creation, as Genesis recounts; *aggadah* relates that God created and destroyed many worlds before this one (*Gen R* 9:2), but through all His doings He is one and unchanging.

God is all-powerful; for Spinoza, His power is identical with His essence (*Ethics* I 34). He is, therefore, awesome. The word "*kadosh*" (holy), it has been suggested, originally denoted something unapproachable, as fire is unapproachable, something threatening and consuming. Three of the sacred Names connote this attribute: *El* is the Mighty One, *Shaddai* is the God of Storms, *Zva-ot* is the Lord of Hosts. God's omnipotence means, too, that He is not subject to any pre-existent and compelling cosmic order — recalcitrant primordial matter, inexorable Fate, or the will of older, more powerful gods. In the perspectives of Judaism, it is precisely the belief in such a supradivine order which is "the stamp of paganism."⁸

God uses His omnipotence to create. The first verse of Scripture is: "In the beginning God created the heaven and earth" (Gen. 1:1). "God never leaves off making," says Philo (*Allegorical Interpretation* I 3); "just as it is the property of fire to burn and of snow to chill, so it is of God to make." In Spinoza's idiom we could say that creativity belongs to God's essence.

7. George Foote Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Harvard, 1927), 3 vols., I, p. 371.

8. Max Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (Bloch, 1972), p. 284.

How God can create out of nothing, and how an infinite God can create a finite world, remain problems for theologians, and they are dealt with in neo-Platonist and Kabbalistic Judaic philosophy by way of the doctrine of creation by emanations from the Divine, by the *Sefirot* rather than by the *En Sof*.

In the Judaic conception of God's cosmological powers there is a strain of naturalism. Michaelangelo's painting of the creation of Adam, which literalizes the finger of God, and William Blake's drawing of God holding a draftsman's pair of compasses both put God outside of nature, in images which compel the imagination but hardly satisfy the mind. God, in Judaism, is neither sculptor nor engineer, nor is He a cosmic magician pulling a world out of God-knows-what empty hat. Maimonides describes as the aim of his *Guide* (I 26), "to put an end to the fantasies that come from the age of infancy." In the same tradition of Jewish rationalism, Einstein says that "the Jewish God is simply a negation of superstition, an imaginary result of its elimination."⁹

The workings of the Divine are manifest *within* nature. We pray for rain, but "God declares to the earth, 'Bring Me your clouds, and you will receive rain.'"¹⁰ Judaism emphasizes, by and large, not miracles as departures from the order of nature, but the miraculousness of that order itself. In the *Amidah*, repeated thrice every day, the worshipper gives thanks "for Your miracles, which are with us daily, and for Your wonders and benefits, which are done at all times, evening, morning and afternoon . . ." A devout Hassid dismissed tales of an allegedly wonder-working rabbi with the remark, "At the home of *my* rabbi we scooped miracles up by the bucketful, waded in miracles up to the knees." By gematria, "*Elohim*" is found to be equivalent to "*ha-teva*," the word for "nature." Spinoza's "*Deus sive Natura*" is not such a departure from traditional Judaism as might be supposed.

Judaism remains theistic, stopping far short of the monism of Hindu thought. Pantheism, however, is by no means unknown to Judaism. It can be identified in Philo; Ibn Gavirol; the *Zohar*; Moses Cordovero, the theoretician of the circle of Isaac Luria; and, especially, in Nachman Krochmal, philosopher of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment. Pantheism is not too jarring to the Judaic mind, for pantheism does reject polytheism and idolatry. That there are pantheistic trends in Judaism has been obscured, scholars have noted, because Jewish pantheists have generally tried to speak the language of theism.¹¹

II

For all His infinite greatness, God is humble, manifesting Himself in

9. Albert Einstein, *The World as I See It* (1934).

10. *The Midrash on Psalms*, ed. William G. Braude (Yale, 1959), 2 vols., on *Psalm* 135:1.

11. Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Schocken, 1946), p. 222.

a lowly thorn-bush as an expression of His humility (*Sota* 5), and revealing His Torah on the relatively unimposing Sinai. "Wherever in Scripture you find reference to God's greatness," says the Talmud, "you find reference also to His humility" (*Megillah* 31a). In the creation of man, God imposed limits on His own power; "everything is in the power of Heaven except reverence for Heaven" (*Berakhot* 33 b). Man is free to worship God or idols, to walk in His path or to turn aside. The destiny of the cosmos hinges on what man chooses.

This doctrine has been singled out as a central point of difference between Judaism and its pagan predecessors. The mythological wars of the gods were replaced by "the historical struggle of man against the word of God . . . The divine drama unfolds in the dimension of human history and morality."¹² Man was created in the image of God, and is to act in accord with the divine element in his make-up. What is demanded of him is to live in imitation of God: "Even as He is gracious, so be you gracious; even as He is merciful, so be you merciful; even as He is holy, so be you holy" (*Shabbat* 133 b).

The cosmological God is an ethical Deity as well, not only omnipotent but also perfect. Fear of the one is linked to love for the other. A contract with the Supreme Power becomes a covenant with Goodness and Purity. In God, "mercy and truth are met together . . . Truth springs out of the earth and righteousness has looked down from heaven" (*Psalms* 85:11). Earth and heaven, fact and value, cosmology and morality are united in God's being. The union constitutes holiness. The numinous holds us at a distance because of Its awesome power, but draws us near by the perfection of Its goodness.

God is altogether righteous. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" asks Abraham (*Gen.* 18:25). He is "the Righteous One of all the worlds" (*Yoma* 37 a). The Divine Power is not arbitrary or capricious. Gilgamesh was saved from a Flood because he was a favorite of the gods; Noah, because he was righteous and whole-hearted, a man who walked with God. Man's fate lies in his own hands, subject neither to the decrees of destiny nor to the guilt of his forebears or of his tribe.

The kingdom of God is ethically defined, a state of being in this world. To live in that kingdom depends on moral action, not on propitiation of a threatening Power. "Has God as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of God?" (1 Sam. 15:22). The Prophets insist that God is served by a virtuous life, not merely by the performance of rituals (*Amos* 5:21-4, *Isaiah* 1:11, 15-17, and *passim*). An *aggadah* relates that Satan accused Israel of neglecting God, to which He retorted, "Let them forget Me altogether, if only they live by My Law."

God is the Author of the moral law, and sees to its execution. The most widely read chapters of the *Mishnah* are the tractate on ethics called

12. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* (University of Chicago, 1960), p. 12.

Pirke Avot (Sayings of the Fathers). There we find the injunction: "Know what is above you — a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all your deeds written in a book" (*Avot* II, 1). Article Ten of Maimonides' Creed affirms that God "knows every deed of the children of men, and all their thoughts." Morality does not rest on externally imposed rewards and punishments; it has intrinsic worth. The reward of virtue is the virtue that it draws in its train; the punishment for sin is more sinning (*Avot* IV 2).

How to reconcile God's power and goodness with the evil which often befalls the righteous man is the classical problem of evil, with which the book of Job is concerned. Rabbinic Judaism, by and large, sets the problem aside: "It is not in our power to explain either the prosperity of the wicked or the afflictions of the righteous" (*Avot* IV 19). The Rabbis might well have endorsed Kant's dictum: Do your duty, and leave the consequences to God.

In Kabbalah, the attempt was sometimes made to account for man's fate by a doctrine of transmigration of souls (*gilgul neshamot*), as in the Hindu and Buddhist conception of *karma*. The doctrine appears in the *Bahir*, the *Zohar*, and in the writings of the Lurian philosopher, Hayyim Vital. It was resolutely opposed by Saadiah Gaon, and plays no role in contemporary Judaism. The problem of evil has been given new urgency in our time by the Holocaust. Many Jews today repeat the Scriptural question, "If God be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" (Judges 6:13). No one answer is accepted by all Jews.

The moral governance of the world by an all-powerful God is known as Providence. God has purposes inexorably fulfilled in the ongoing of events. This "teleology of history," rather than the creation of heaven and earth, gives God His central religious significance. That is the position taken by Yehudah Halevi, as against Saadiah Gaon's emphasis on the creation of the world out of nothing. Maimonides does not refer to Creation in any of the articles of his Creed. The Judaic God usually identifies Himself to His people, not as the Creator, but as the God Who brought them forth from slavery in Egypt.

Spinoza scoffs at the concept of the Will of God as "the sanctuary of ignorance" (*Ethics* I, Appendix). It is, if it is invoked as a substitute for causal explanation, but not if it is seen as working itself out by way of natural processes. When the city of Safed was under attack during Israel's War of Independence, the rabbi of the city gave assurance that "We will surely be rescued, either through natural means or by a miracle." Asked for an amplification he explained, "The natural means is for God to save us, as He always has; the miracle will be if our army arrives in time!" Another variant is that when a rabbi thanked God for the miraculous restoration of the State someone chided, "Don't you think that David ben Gurion had something to do with it?" The rabbi replied, "Ben Gurion himself is the miracle."

The concept of Providence endows with significance every object

and every event. "In the whole realm of nature," says Maimonides (*Guide* III, 25), "there is nothing purposeless, trivial or unnecessary." That is especially true with regard to the individual human being. In paganism it was widely believed that the gods concern themselves only with the destiny of nations, or with the doings of kings and other great ones of the earth — a view shared by the Sadducees. Rabbinic Judaism was shaped, rather, by the Pharisees, following the teaching of the Prophets: God cares for each individual soul.

Providence is at work in all things, both great and small. "No man suffers so much as a prick of his finger unless it has been decreed in heaven" (*Hullin* 7 b). "A snake never bites, a lion never rends, a government never interferes unless so ordered from above" (*Eccles. R.* 10:11). "There is not a single blade of grass below but has a director up above, who taps it and says, 'Grow!'" (*Gen. R.* 10:6). "Not a sparrow falls into the net without God's will" (*Gen. R.* 79:16; compare Matthew 10:29). "Every hair on the head of man is counted and cared for in the heavenly order" (*Baba Bathra* 16 a; Matthew 10:30). Again and again, God's ceaseless watchfulness is reaffirmed.

Faith in Providence intensifies a danger faced by every religion with a personal God — the danger of anthropomorphism. A God Who cares is unacceptably tainted with human frailty. "God is without passions," Spinoza declares (*Ethics* V 17), "neither is He affected by any emotion of pleasure or pain." The problem was also recognized by Yehudah Halevi (II 2): "They attribute to Him mercy, although this is surely nothing but a weakness of the soul . . . which cannot be applied to God . . . He has no sympathy with one nor anger with another."

The difficulty is not altogether disposed of by the doctrine, found both in Halevi (IV 5) and in Maimonides (*Guide* I 36), that the emotions ascribed to God are projections of what a man of moral sensibility would feel at the sight of virtue and vice. Even a passionless God is conceived only in unacceptably human terms. "We speak of the 'Creator'," says Saadia Gaon (II 11), "but we must not construe the term in a corporeal sense. A physical agent must himself move, . . . needs materials, time, space and tools. All this is far removed from God." A similar objection is raised to speaking of God as proclaiming the moral law. "Some believe," notes Maimonides (*Guide* II 12), "that God commands an action in words consisting, like ours, of letters and sounds. . . . All this is the work of imagination."

Whatever philosophical objections there may be to the conception of a personal God, religion cannot easily do without it. "It is from the god's personality," Henri Bergson says, "that religion draws its greatest efficacy."¹³ That is certainly true of the God of Abraham, whose Covenant can hardly be thought of except in terms of the human roles which define

13. Henri Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Holt, 1946), p. 164.

loving care. Isaiah speaks of God as a father (63:16), mother (66:13), bridegroom (62:5), husband (54:5), friend (41:8), shepherd (40:11), king (43:15) and ruler (33:22). The Talmud says straight out, "The divine love for you is as the love of man and woman" (*Yoma* 54 a). What else is love to mean if it has nothing to do with the relation of human beings to one another?

Judaism does not shy away from anthropomorphic locutions, nor are these limited to extra-canonical writings. Saadiah Gaon (II 2) lists ten parts of the human body applied to God in Scripture: the head (Isaiah 59:17), eyes (Deut. 11:12), ears (Num. 6:25), hands (Exod. 9:3), the heart (Gen. 8:21), bowels (Jeremiah 31:20), and feet (Psalm 99:5). What Judaism objects to is not the anthropomorphism of God but the deification of man.¹⁴ "You are but a man, and no god" the Prophet reminds us (Ezek. 28:2). How, then, can human terms be used to characterize God?

The answer is that such terms are metaphorical. Saadiah explains (II 3) that, "All those attributes of an apparently anthropomorphic character which we, the community of the believers, use in speaking of Him, have a symbolic and figurative meaning; they must not be taken in their literal sense as one would apply them to a man." Some metaphors are better grounded than others: God is not literally alive, but He is surely not dead; He is not literally merciful, but surely not cruel. Words referring to human emotions and parts of the human body sometimes have a non-anthropomorphic meaning even when used in connection with man, Saadiah points out (II 2); how much more so when used in relation to God.

Shakespeare uses many anthropomorphic expressions in relation to time: "the tooth of time" (*Measure for Measure* V, 1), "swift-footed time" (*Sonnet* 19), "winter's ragged hand" (*Sonnet* 6), "the morn walks" (*Hamlet* I, 1), "the tender eye of pitiful day" (*Macbeth* III, 2), "the cheek of night" (*Romeo and Juliet* I, 5), "the old face of black night" (*Sonnet* 27), and "the iron tongue of midnight" (*Midsummer Night's Dream* V, 1). No one argues, on this basis, that Shakespeare had no conception of time, or that his conception was sunk in superstition.

Because God transcends every part of His creation, even the whole of it, metaphor is the only alternative to the silence of the mystic. As early as the second century, a commentary justified the figurative language in Scripture with the observation that "we describe God by terms borrowed from His creation in order to make them intelligible to the human ear" (*Mekhilta* on Exod. 19:18). Spinoza offered the same explanation: "God is described as a lawgiver or prince, and styled just, merciful, and so on, merely in concession to popular understanding" (*Theologico-Political Treatise* IV). The Talmud notes many times that the Torah uses ordinary language (for instance, *Yebamot* 71 a, *Kiddushin* 17 b, *Makkot* 12 a, *Ketubot* 67 b), though usually this is cited in connection with derivations of *hala-*

14. Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (Schocken, 1961), pp. 37-8.

khah rather than in connection with the problem of anthropomorphism. The dictum is relied on by Maimonides (*Guide* I, 26).

III

The Judaic God is preeminently a benevolent Deity, caring lovingly for all His creatures. "The Lord is good to all. His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalm 145:9). "God is perfect goodness," says Maimonides (*Guide* III, 12), "and all that comes from Him is absolutely good." A familiar figure in the Talmud (*Ta'anit* 21 a) is Naḥum Gamzu: whatever befell he declared, like Pangloss, "This too is for good!" His name is popularly construed as the opening words of his maxim, as if he were called "Naḥum Thistoo".

The world was created by the quality of mercy (*middat ha-rahamim*) acting in concert with the quality of justice (*middat ha-din*). Loving-kindness (*hesed*) on the one hand and judgment (*mishpat*) and righteousness (*zedakah*) on the other hand were equally called upon. The Midrash explains that a glass would break if it were filled only with hot water or only with cold; the two must be mixed if the glass is not to shatter (*Gen. R.* 12:15).

One of the most deep-seated misconceptions of Judaism is embodied in the stereotype of the God of the Old Testament as the jealous and vengeful God of Law, in contrast to the New Testament's God of mercy and love. The very name "Old Testament" is prejudicial, implying its being superseded by a "New"; Jews call it simply "the Bible" or "Scripture".

The Talmud frequently uses the appellation "the Merciful one" even in *halakhic* or casuistic discussions of points of Law, showing "how little in the mind of the Rabbis the Law was connected with hardness and chastisement. To them it was an effluence of God's mercy and goodness."¹⁵

For Hasdai Crescas, God's love is the active cosmic principle, the impulse for creation (*Light of the Lord* I 3), like Plato's *eros* and the Hindu *sakti*. In the *Principles* of his follower, Joseph Albo, *gematria* is used to establish an equivalence between the divine attribute singled out in the declaration of the faith, the Lord is one, and His attribute of love (*ehod* and *ahavah*).

God's mercy is a recurrent theme of Scripture. The passage in *Exod.* 34:6-7 is traditionally taken to enumerate thirteen distinct qualities of mercy: "The Lord, the Lord, God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin . . ." The Psalmist declares, "God is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in mercy and truth" (103:8; repeated in 145:8-9). The verse

15. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

continues (103:10-11), "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor requited us according to our failings. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy." Thomas Jefferson aptly remarked, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just . . ." ¹⁶

God's justice is tempered by giving man the benefit of every doubt. If nine hundred and ninety-nine angels argue against a man and only one argues in his favor, that man is saved (Job 33:23), even if nine hundred and ninety-nine parts of that one angel's report are bad and only one part is good (*Shabbat* 32 a). The Talmud apparently computes the odds conferred by God's mercy at a million to one. Judaism does not shrink from the view that the Heavenly Judge is biased in man's favor: when the people of Israel appears for judgment, the angels say, "Fear not! the Judge is your townsman, your kinsman, your brother, your father!" (*Midrash Tehillim* on Psalms 118:10).

Even in anger, God is compassionate (*Pesahim* 87 b); the sages note that even while He cursed the serpent and Canaan, He provided for their sustenance (*Yoma* 75 a). God's mercy extends to the thousandth generation (Exod. 20:5-6, 34:7); in a typical Talmudic turn of phrase God's mercy is said to be hundreds of times as great as His punitive justice, which applies only as far as the third and fourth generation (*Tosefta* to *Sota* 4 b).

God is quick-tempered; He is also quick to recover: "His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime" (Psalm 30:6). The Talmud is once again arithmetical: "God's indignation lasts only one moment, one 58,888th part of an hour" (less than one-tenth of a second!) (*Berakhot* 7 a). Contrary statements can also be found, even in the same tractate, where God's anger is said to be everlasting (*Berakhot* 28 b); but there is no doubt about the main thrust of Judaic teaching on this point. The punishment of the wicked in Hell does not exceed twelve months (*Shabbat* 33 a) — infinitely less than eternal damnation. Elsewhere the Talmud denies that in the World to Come there is any Hell at all — a bright sun shines, healing the righteous and burning the wicked (*Avodah Zarah* 3 b); man lives in a Heaven or Hell of his own making.

God's anger is preceded by whatever is needed to neutralize it: "He first prepares the plaster, then inflicts the wound" (*Megillah* 13 a). "The Holy One heals with the very wound He inflicts" (*Levit. R.* 18:5). God Himself is said to pray on behalf of man:

May it be My will that My mercy overcome My anger, and prevail over My other attributes, so that I may deal with My children mercifully and, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice (*Berakhot* 7 a).

A wholly benevolent god does not yet meet the needs of religion: the god must be one with whom man can communicate. Here is the chief difference between the God of Abraham and the God of Aristotle. What

16. *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 18.

makes Him the God of Abraham is that He established His Covenant with Abraham and his seed. Prayers in Judaism very frequently remind God of His promises. Nor is the Covenant a single communication after which God withdraws from man. God is continuously present to His people. "Wherever Jews dwell," says the *Zohar* (on Numb. 126 a), "God is found among them." This is true, according to the Talmud, even when Jews are unclean (*Gittin* 57 a).

The early national deity of the Hebrews accompanied them in their wanderings; the universal God also is with the Jews wherever they go (*Gen. R.* 86:6, *Deut. R.* 2:16). "Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of God, that in every place to which they were exiled the *Shekhinah* went with them" (*Megillah* 29 a). He will return with them at the Restoration (*Numb. R.* 7:10). Exile and Restoration are construed geographically and politically as well as in a spiritual sense.

God is never out of reach. The Psalmist is eloquent:

Where shall I go from Your spirit, or . . . flee from Your presence? If I go up to Heaven You are there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the outermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand would lead me, and Your right hand would hold me (*Psalm* 139:7-10).

This is also a theme of Yehudah Halevi's poetry: "O God, where shall I find You? All hidden and exalted is Your place; and where shall I not find You? Infinite space is full of Your glory!" (*Poems* 168).

It is possible, therefore, to pray anywhere. When Scripture tells of someone praying, it rarely takes note of his specific location. God declares:

When you would pray, go to the synagogue in your city; when you cannot go to the synagogue in your city, pray in your open field; when you cannot go to your open field, pray in your house; when you cannot go to your house, pray upon your bed; when you cannot pray aloud in your bed, commune with your heart (*Midrash Tehillim* 4:9).

One may pray anywhere because God will present Himself at the place of prayer. "Where men gather for worship, where judges sit as a court to do justice, and where even one man engages in Torah, the *Shekhinah* is there" (*Berakhot* 6a; compare *Matthew* 18:20).

This is not the metaphysical doctrine of an immanent deity. It is the religious affirmation of the nearness of God. However transcendent God's being, nothing stands between Him and those who worship Him. "No iron wall can separate Israel from their Father in heaven" (*Pesahim* 85 b). He is as near to man as his own heart (*Deut.* 30:14). Ibn Gavirol, like Halevi a poet as well as a philosopher, writes, "The infinite heights are too small to contain You, yet you can find a niche in the clefts of my being" (*Religious Poems* 16).

In the Prophets, the Psalms, and, later, in the Talmud, the Judaic God becomes more and more a very present help in time of trouble

(Psalm 46:1), a refuge and shield for the downtrodden and oppressed. The numinous quality of His Holiness evaporates in the warmth of His loving care. In Hassidism God has a homey character. Hassidic prayer is typically conducted in modest quarters — a *shtibl* (literally “small house”); the service tends to be informal, noisy, undisciplined. In the folk culture portrayed by Sholom Aleichem and S.Y. Agnon, God is addressed intimately, almost casually; in Yiddish He is often called “*Tatenu*” — not “Father” but “Daddy” — sometimes even “my Darling.”

There is also to be found in Judaism a spirit of independence of paternal care: the leader of the last revolt against the Romans, Bar Kochba, exclaimed before a battle, “God, don’t help us, and don’t spoil it for us!” There is a tradition, extending from the time of Job to the present day, of arguing with God about the justice of His ways.¹⁷

God can be found within one’s heart, provided man gives up what Philo calls “self-conceits” (*Allegorical Interpretation* III, 15). In Hassidic teaching, when we are too full of self there is no room for God. “Where is God to be found?” asks one of the leaders of Hassidism, Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. His answer is, “Wherever we allow Him to be.” God assures us, “Those that seek Me earnestly shall find Me” (Prov. 8:17; compare Matthew 7:7). This is the basis of one of the popular tales of Hassidism. The *rebbe* was being visited by his grandson, who burst into the house dissolved in tears. “I was playing hide-and-seek with my friends,” the child explained, “and when it was my turn to hide I waited and waited but my friends had gone away.” The *rebbe*’s eyes, too, brimmed with tears as he comforted the boy. “God says the same thing: ‘I hide, and no one seeks Me!’”

That those who seek Him will find Him is a recurrent Scriptural teaching. “What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him?” (Deut. 4:7). The Psalmist echoes (145:18), “The Lord is near to all who call upon Him.” The Talmud is idiomatic: “God says to man, ‘If you come to My house, I will come to your house’” (*Sukkah* 53 a). In Yehudah Halevi, the same idea is poetically expressed: “Going forth to meet You, I have found You coming toward me” (*Selected Poems* 168).

God comes toward man because He needs man — a doctrine widespread among mystics of a variety of faiths. God becomes a god only if He is worshipped: “When you are My witnesses, I am God; when you are not My witnesses, I am, as it were, not God” (*Midrash Tehillim* 123:2). This is not the absurdity that God’s existence depends upon man, as though He were a creature of man’s making. His role as God depends on there being men in relation to whom He plays that role: “If My people decline to pro-

17. Described in my article “The Jewish Argument With God,” *Commentary*, 70, No. 4 (October 1980): 43-47.

claim Me as King upon earth, My kingdom ceases also in heaven" (*Esther* R. 23:1).

In the Jerusalem Talmud, God's pronouncement, "I have brought you forth from Egypt" becomes, by a change of vowels, "I was brought forth with you from Egypt" (*J. Succot* 4:3). Israel becomes a nation and God becomes a god in the same sequence of events. "God's full Name first appeared when the world was complete" (*Gen. R.* 13:3), for it is only then that He becomes the Creator. The impersonal *En Sof* becomes a Person only with the Revelation.¹⁸

Man's alienation from God has its impact on God as well. "With Israel in Exile, the Divine Name is incomplete," says the *Zohar* (on *Gen.* 95 b); the *Shekhinah* is correspondingly alienated from the *En Sof*. In the Lurian *Kabbalah* this gives to man a measureless importance. It defines his spiritual mission, which is to achieve, not the salvation (*yeshuah*) of the soul, but the redemption (*tikkun*) of the cosmos, the restoration of God's unity with Himself and with His world. The Redeemer is to be redeemed. There is a correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, between the Lower World and the Upper World. What man does here determines what will happen There. "From an activity below there is stimulated a corresponding activity on High . . . If there is no impulse from below there is no stirring Above" (*Zohar* II 156 b, 235 a).

An infinite asymmetry in the relation between God and man remains, or the doctrine would be calling for the worst form of idol-worship, the worship of man himself. Man is a partner (*shutaf*) of the Divine, but he is in partnership only with the ethical Deity, not with the cosmological Deity, with the God of the Covenant, not with Him Who created the heavens and the earth. Man was created last, the Talmud remarks (*Sanhedrin* 38 a), in order to avoid any suspicion that he helped the Creation.

Man *does* help in the creation of the Kingdom of God, in establishing a moral order in the world. "Every judge who judges with complete fairness even for a single hour," the Talmud says (*Shabbat* 10 a), "the Writ gives him credit as though he had become a partner to the Holy One, Blessed be He, in the Creation." Man creates by virtue of the divine power in his make-up, the moral sensibility of the soul which God gave him. It is His own spirit which God breathed into man. In the end, *gematria* reveals, "Adam" is equivalent to "YHVH."

IV

God manifests special grace toward Israel, His people, with whom He established His Covenant; His dominion and power are world-wide. The national God worshipped by the Sadducees eventually gave way to

18. Scholem, *Mysticism*, p. 12.

Pharisee universalism. The Psalms are addressed to the God of Israel; the Talmud uses the formula, "King of the Universe" (*Berakhot* 40 b). The Covenant remains, but it is with a God who rules all.

Universalism means the perception of all peoples as members of a single family of man. Rationalist universalism, a cardinal tenet of Stoic thought as well as of Enlightenment liberalism, rests on the commonality of the faculty of reason with which all men are endowed. Pragmatic universalism, emerging in our own day, rests on the interdependence of peoples on one another — passengers on a single planet, sharing the same fate. Judaism embodies a prophetic universalism: there is a universal morality, rooted in the common Source and Destiny of all men.

"Have we not all one Father?" asks the Prophet; "Has not one God created us?" (Malachi 2:10; Job 31:15). Noah, who lived generations before the first Jew, Abraham, is one of the few persons explicitly identified in Scripture as a righteous man; the "Code of Noah," comprising all the ethical commandments, as distinct from the specifically religious ones, is binding on all men. Judaism often reaffirms that the Holy Spirit rests on men only according to their deeds.

Judaism has seldom been a missionizing religion, but neither is it closed to non-Jews. Abraham himself was a convert; no less a personage than King David was descended from a convert — Ruth. Maimonides explains that converts, like all other Jews, must pray to "our God and the God of our fathers;" it is only spiritual descent which is relevant, and the convert has obtained a whole new ancestry. God goes forward to meet all who come to Him.

The voice at Sinai spoke in all the seventy languages of the earth (*Shabbat* 88 b). The question is always who hears the voice and responds. "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples," says God (Isaiah 56:7) — if only they come to pray. The Judaic faith is that they *will* come. Judaism looks to a past of slavery in Egypt; it looks even more to a future in which all men will be freed from human bondage. In the words of the Prophet (Zechariah 14:9), which are still part of the thrice-daily liturgy, "God will become king over all the earth; on that day God will be one and His Name one."

Credo: I Am A Jew

DAVID SPARENBERG

ONE OF THE CHIEF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE Jew today is to take a strong stand on behalf of the Palestinian people; to clasp with the hand that is not clasping the hand of Israel the hand of the Palestinians. A mediating friendship is in order. This mediating position most naturally and logically falls to the American Jew, then to the Jewish man and woman internationally.

So we would fulfill, or at least initiate, the confession of identity by Edmond Fleg, recorded in the Sabbath and Festival prayerbook of the Rabbinical Assembly:

I am a Jew because in all places where there are tears and suffering the Jew weeps; I am a Jew because Israel's promise is a universal promise; I am a Jew because Israel places man and his unity above nations and above Israel itself.

In this way we will move ourselves and our family toward repairing any rift, toward dissolving any disparity between this people Israel and Israel the state, emblem and homeland of a people whose mission to humanity cannot be dismissed and must not be forsaken, for our sakes, as for the sake of Heaven.

To disregard these qualities in the character of Jewish identity as impractical and unpracticable vestiges of an antiquated idealism, is to disregard much of Jewish faith. And for this writer, at least, it is highly questionable whether the Jewish people can exist with any purposive continuance without the humanly sensitized inheritance of Jewishness, or whether Jewishness can survive devoid of the faith that moves and opens the portals of human concern and bears the responsibility of commitment.

Within the same confession of identity already cited, it is recalled to us farther that "the message of Israel is the most ancient and the most modern." And within the truth of that recollection we are brought to realize that whatever is good for this people at one time is good at another. There is no end to the humanism that is Jewishness, short of an end to humanity itself.

It could be argued that, after the Holocaust, revenge is in order. But revenge is an alien weapon in the arsenals of the nations and can only be a thorn in the heart of this people. What is truly in order for Israel is not

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only survival but prevalence; the intentional prevailing of those standards and qualities which our sages and saints have worked into a sensibility of nuances and strength unequaled by other peoples and faiths, and which demands of the Jew the holy mission (Buber would have expressed it the humanly holy mission) of binding the wounds, leading out of darkness, setting free from the dungeons of hostility, obliquity and fear.

Rather than revenge, then, a vulnerable people must continue to make its vulnerability a standard of human acceptance — not to surrender to violence but to conquer it with the wisdom and love which is the patrimony of this people and the final meaning derived from saying, “I am a Jew.” In this regard, we cannot speak of odds, because the odds have never been in favor of this identity, but only God Himself, since He chose our father and was chosen by His children in return.

“I am a Jew,” then, becomes (as it ever has been) a banner of sensitized responsibility, fanned by the winds of creative dialogue in which the Jew of today stands integrally open before the condition and needs of his neighbors and prospective friends. To be thus attentive is to live within the dignity of Jewishness, to exhibit the particularized universalism of Jewish election, the enduring fidelity of Jewish faith.

“I am a Jew” is to be human. And who are the doers, if not we? And when is the doing, if not now?

Maimonides' Messianic Age

ARYEH BOTWINICK

THE ORDINARY JEW, IN HIS PRAYERS, IS AWARE of the importance of redemption and immortality as central categories of Jewish faith. But the abundance of terms used in Jewish tradition has helped create widespread lack of clarity with regard to the various concepts involved. A classic expression of the hope for redemption is found in the *Hakol Yodukha* prayer which is recited every Shabbat. The relevant portion of it reads as follows:

There is none to be compared unto Thee, neither is there any beside Thee; there is none but Thee: Who is like unto Thee? There is none to be compared unto Thee, O Lord our God, in this world, neither is there any beside Thee, O our King, for the life of the world to come; there is none but Thee, O our Redeemer, for the days of the Messiah; neither is there any like unto Thee, O our Savior, for the resurrection of the dead.

The impression emerging from this prayer — and from other examples that one might adduce — is of an amorphously conceived period or state of redemption that is referred to by the multitude, overlapping metaphors of *Olam Haba*, *Yemot Hamashiah* and *Tehiyat Hametim*. Maimonides, however, with his urge towards clarity, organization and comprehensiveness, is not content to leave the Jewish conceptualization of redemption on this level. From his writings there emerges a carefully drawn tri-partite scheme of Jewish redemption which fills in with a precise content the three terms that are alluded to in quick succession in the prayer that I have just cited.

He draws a sharp line of distinction between *Olam Haba* — “The world to Come” — and *Yemot Hamashiah* — “The Days of the Messiah.” *Olam Haba*, according to Maimonides, is not an earthly realm — a continuation of human history with Israel victorious — but a sheerly transcendental realm of disembodied souls which coexists with our current world and would presumably continue to coexist with this earthly realm even after the arrival of *Melekh Hamashiah* — King Messiah — and which serves as the ultimate reward for the righteous. In Maimonides' phrase in *Hilkhot Teshuvah* — the Laws of Repentance: “The ultimate and perfect reward, the final bliss which will suffer neither interruption nor diminution is the life of the world to come.”¹ In contrast to this, Maimonides immediately goes on to add: “The Messianic era, on the other hand, will be realized in

1. *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 9, 2. Moses Hyamson translation, with one emendation on my part.

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this world; which will continue its normal course except that independent sovereignty will be restored to Israel. The ancient sages already said, 'The only difference between the present and the Messianic era is that political oppression will then cease.'²

The *locus classicus* for Maimonides' formulation of *Yemot Hamashiah* is in his *Code, Hilkhot Melakhim U'Milhamotehem* — Laws of Kings and their Wars — Chapters Eleven and Twelve:

King Messiah will arise and restore the kingdom of David to its former state and original sovereignty. He will rebuild the sanctuary and gather the dispersed of Israel. All the ancient laws will be reinstituted in his days; sacrifices will again be offered; the Sabbatical and Jubilee years will again be observed in accordance with the commandments set forth in the Law.

Do not think that King Messiah will have to perform signs and wonders, bring anything new into being, revive the dead, or do similar things. It is not so. Rabbi Akiba was a great sage, a teacher of the Mishnah, yet he was also the armor-bearer of Ben Koziba. He affirmed that the latter was King Messiah; he and all the wise men of his generation shared this belief until Ben Koziba was slain in (his) iniquity. Since he was killed it became known to them that he was not (the Messiah). Yet the Rabbis had not asked him for a sign or token.

If there arise a king from the House of David who meditates on the Torah, occupies himself with the commandments, as did his ancestor David, observes the precepts prescribed in the Written and the Oral Law, prevails upon Israel to walk in the way of the Torah and to repair its breaches, and fights the battles of the Lord, it may be assumed that he is the Messiah. If he does these things and succeeds, rebuilds the sanctuary on its site, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is beyond all doubt the Messiah. He will prepare the whole world to serve the Lord with one accord, as it is written: For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent (Zeph. 3:9).

Until this point I have been quoting from the Yale Judaica Series translation of Maimonides' *Code*, with one or two significant emendations which reflect what I take to be a more correct version of Maimonides' original words as contained in the *Rambam L'Am* edition of Maimonides' *Code*. What follows is my translation of an additional section that is completely omitted in the Yale Judaica Series translation and is based upon an ancient Yemenite manuscript of Maimonides' *Code* in the possession of the contemporary Maimonidean scholar, Rabbi Joseph Kapach, and is reprinted in the *Rambam L'Am* edition of Maimonides' *Code*.

And if he [King Messiah] did not succeed until this point [in accomplishing all the things that were enumerated above], or was killed, it is evident that he is not the person concerning which the Torah foretold,³ and he is [just] like all the other kings of the House of David who were virtuous and honest who died. And he was ordained by God only to test the multitude, as it is stated, "And some of them that are wise shall stumble, to refine among

2. Ibid.

3. This statement would seem to be an oblique attack on the claims of Jesus as the Messiah.

them, and to purify, and to make white, even to the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed" (*Daniel* 11,35).

Continuing with Maimonides' text as found in the Yale Judaica Series:

Let no one think that in the days of the Messiah any of the laws of nature will be set aside, or any innovation be introduced into creation. The world will follow its normal course. The words of Isaiah: And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid (Isa. 11:6) are to be understood figuratively, meaning that Israel will live securely among the wicked of the heathens who are likened to wolves and leopards, as it is written: A wolf of the deserts doth spoil them, a leopard watcheth over their cities (Jer. 5:6). They will all accept the true religion, and will neither plunder nor destroy, and together with Israel earn a comfortable living in a legitimate way, as it is written: And the lion shall eat straw like the ox (Isa. 11:7). All similar expressions used in connection with the Messianic age are metaphorical. In the days of King Messiah the full meaning of those metaphors and their allusions will become clear to all.

Said the Rabbis: The sole difference between the present and the Messianic days is delivery from servitude to foreign powers (B. *San.* 91b).

But no one is in a position to know the details of this and similar things until they have come to pass. They are not explicitly stated by the Prophets. Nor have the Rabbis any tradition with regard to these matters. They are guided solely by what the scriptural texts seem to imply. Hence there is a divergence of opinion on the subject. But be that as it may, neither the exact sequence of those events nor the details thereof constitute religious dogmas. No one should ever occupy himself with the Aggadic statements or spend much time on midrashic statements bearing on this and like subjects. He should not deem them of prime importance, since they lead neither to the fear of sin nor to the love of Him. Nor should one calculate the end. Said the Rabbis: Blasted be those who reckon out the end (B. *San.* 97b). One should wait (for his coming) and accept in principle this article of faith, as we have stated before.

The Sages and Prophets did not long for the days of the Messiah that they might exercise dominion over the world, or enslave the heathens, or be exalted by the nations, or that they might eat and drink and rejoice. Their aspiration was that they be free to devote themselves to the Torah and its wisdom, with no one to oppress or disturb them, and thus be worthy of life in the world to come.

In that era there will be neither famine nor war, neither jealousy nor strife. Blessings will be abundant, comforts within the reach of all. The one preoccupation of the whole world will be to know the Lord. Hence Israelites will be very wise, they will know the things that are now concealed and will attain an understanding of their Creator to the utmost capacity of the human mind, as it is written: For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).

As for the third eschatological term — *Tehiyat Hametim* — the resurrection of the dead — the clearest formulation of Maimonides' position comes, I think, from *Ma-amar B'Tehiyat Hametim* — Essay on the Resurrection of the Dead. It was written to refute those who claimed that Maimonides rejected the notion of resurrection of the dead in his commentary on the Mishnah and in his *Code*. This is the way Maimonides describes his

position: "God will resurrect the dead in accordance with His desire, and will when He will, and want whom He will want, either during the Messianic age or before it or after it."⁴ Throughout this essay he emphasizes that resurrection of the dead encompasses resurrection of the body as well as of the soul. *Tehiyat Hametim* involves a total resurrection of the person, which, since it defies reason we follow the principle of *ein lekha bo elah hidusho*: we restrict our elucidation of the notion to what its sense fully literally conceived conveys, consigning to the realm of faith all questions of empirical application.

For Maimonides it is with *Tehiyat Hametim* as it is with the very concept of God itself. We only know that it exists, but not what it signifies. In harmony with his conceptualization of *Yemot Hamashiah* as being strictly continuous with historical time, he says that *Tehiyat Hametim* — resurrection of the dead — as a genuine miracle that cannot be schematized by human reason, can occur either before, during, or even *after* the Messianic age. *Tehiyat Hametim* as a miraculous intrusion into historical time leaves entirely undiminished and unscathed the more tractable rational categories of *Yemot Hamashiah* — the Messianic age — and *Olam Haba* — the world to come.

II

Now that we have briefly considered each member of the family of notions of *Yemot Hamashiah*, *Olam Haba* and *Tehiyat Hametim* in turn — and explored the pattern of relationship that subsists between them — we should consider more closely the central theme of *Yemot Hamashiah* to understand the sources of Maimonides' delineation of this concept and its major ramifications. The crucial Talmudic source for Maimonides' conceptualization of *Yemot Hamashiah* is Samuel's statement — cited six times in the Talmud — that the only difference between this world and *Yemot Hamashiah* is the removal of the yoke of the nations, citing the verse in Deuteronomy that "the poor shall never cease out of the land" — which suggests for Samuel that the broad physical and cultural typology of the earth will remain the same indefinitely. In three out of the six places in the Talmud where Samuel's statement is cited it is counterposed by a statement of R. Hiyya b. Abba, that "all the prophets prophesied only for the Messianic age, but as for the world to come, The eye hath not seen O Lord beside Thee what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him" (Isaiah 64,3).

The Talmud⁵ assumes that both Samuel and R. Hiyya b. Abba are addressing the same state of affairs variously designated as *Yemot Hamashiah* and *Olam Habah* and that they are saying contradictory things about it. R. Hiyya adopts an apocalyptic view toward the future. The period of

4. *Iggerot HaRambam*, Kapach ed., p. 86. My translation.

5. T.B. *Shabbat*, 63a.

Geulah — redemption — is so totally discontinuous with what came before that the imagery of the prophets which officially speaks to the Messianic age has to be construed as relating to a period which is anterior to the epoch of total, final redemption. Samuel, by contrast, adopts a determinedly antiapocalyptic view. Human life remains fundamentally the same in the Messianic age as it was before — the kinds of physical, social and economic constraints on human life that we are all familiar with will persist in the Messianic age — except that the Jews are able to enjoy an undisturbed national autonomy.

When we juxtapose the Talmudic texts that I have just cited alongside *Maimonides'* text in his *Code* two immediate questions emerge:

First: Maimonides codifies both Samuel's and R. Hiyya b. Abba's views, apparently regarding them as mutually supportive and reinforcing, rather than as contradictory. In the Eighth Chapter of the *Laws of Repentance*, Paragraph Seven, Maimonides says as follows:

But as for the bliss of the world to come, naught can be compared with, or likened to, it. And the prophets did not depict it, so as not to depreciate it by their imagination. Thus Isaiah said, "Eye hath not seen beside Thee, O God, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him" (Isaiah 64:3). This is to say that the bliss which neither the eye of the prophet nor anyone else but God has seen, is prepared for the man who waits for Him. The Sages say, "All the prophets only prophesied concerning the days of the Messiah. But the world to come, 'no eye hath seen but Thine, O God.'"

Yet, in Chapter Nine, Paragraph Two of the same *Laws of Repentance* — as well as in Chapter Twelve, Paragraph Two of the *Laws of Kings and their Wars* cited earlier — Maimonides cites with approval Samuel's dictum concerning the continuity of the Messianic age.

Second: with regard to a controversy in the tractate *Shabbat* 63a, Maimonides codifies the law in accordance with the first view cited in the Mishnah — that a person must not go out accoutred with the armaments of war on the Sabbath — and yet the Talmud aligns this first view with R. Hiyya b. Abba, in contradistinction to Samuel, and Maimonides codifies the law in accordance with Samuel in some key sections of his *Code* as we have just seen. Let me indicate what issues pertaining to the laws of the Sabbath motivate the discussion in the Mishnah in the tractate *Shabbat*. Generally speaking, if something is a *massoi* — a load, associated with work and carrying — it is forbidden to carry it out on the Sabbath, whereas if it is a *takhshit* — an ornament — wearing it on one's person as one moves about on the Sabbath does not constitute a violation of the prohibition against carrying from one jurisdiction to another on the Sabbath. Maimonides, by prohibiting the wearing of armaments on the Sabbath⁶ refuses to accord to military equipment the status of an ornament, apparently because it would not be used in the epoch of Jewish redemption, fol-

6. *Code*: Laws of Sabbath, 19:1.

lowing R. Hiyya b. Abba's view of historical discontinuity and rejecting Samuel's view of historical continuity.

In order to resolve these two difficulties, I propose the following approach. Maimonides apparently found both Samuel's statement and R. Hiyya b. Abba's statement appealing and persuasive as visions of Jewish redemption. Notwithstanding the Talmud's consistent approach of regarding these statements as opposing each other — and as mutually exclusive — Maimonides sought for strategies by means of which the divergent perspectives expressed by Samuel and R. Hiyya b. Abba could be reconciled.

I think that, in the end, Maimonides opted for two strategies of reconciliation, both of which are suggested by the *sugya* in the tractate *Shabbat* which I have mentioned. The raw language of Samuel's and R. Hiyya b. Abba's statements suggests one strategy of reconciliation and the context of the discussion in *Shabbat* suggests another. In their pristine formulations, Samuel refers to *Yemot Hamashiah* and R. Hiyya b. Abba refers to *Olam Haba*. If the two notions of *Yemot Hamashiah* and *Olam Haba* could be conceptualized in such a way that both their sense and reference would diverge, then this would provide one strategy of reconciliation. As we have seen from our earlier analysis, Maimonides pursues this approach — what we might call the general strategy of resolution — to the full. What is not so apparent is that he also follows another strategy of reconciliation — what we might call the special strategy of resolution — which is equally suggested by the *sugya* in *Shabbat*, and that is that *Yemot Hamashiah* and *Olam Haba* both refer to the same amorphously defined, fairly indistinguishable circumstances of redemption. The context — as opposed to the literal language — of the Talmudic discussion in *Shabbat* presupposes this — that the referent of the two terms *Yemot Hamashiah* and *Olam Haba* is the same — by regarding Samuel's statement and R. Hiyya b. Abba's statement as being mutually exclusive.

In his second strategy of reconciliation, Maimonides allows the context of the discussion in *Shabbat*, rather than the raw words of Samuel and R. Hiyya b. Abba to be decisive — and, therefore, there is only one concept of redemption with which normative Judaism is working rather than two — variously labeled *Olam Haba* and *Yemot Hamashiah*. This unitary concept is roughly equivalent to *Yemot Hamashiah* in Maimonides' tripartite scheme of *Olam Haba*, *Yemot Hamashiah* and *Tehiyat Hametim*. Now, with regard to this unitary image of redemption — the hyphenated concept of *Olam Haba-Yemot Hamashiah* — Maimonides regards the strategies implicit in Samuel's and R. Hiyya b. Abba's statements as being complementary. One could even go so far as to say that the complementariness thesis concerning Samuel's and R. Hiyya b. Abba's views is suggested by the Talmudic text itself. R. Hiyya b. Abba says "no eye hath seen . . ." only with regard to *Olam Haba*, as if to suggest that concerning *Yemot Hamashiah* — which is the subject of Samuel's statement — he accepts Samuel's

thesis of historical continuity. Samuel looks upon the age of redemption in a thoroughly non-apocalyptic, completely voluntaristic way. Human history forms a seamless web from beginning to end and the central categories of thought and action remain uniform throughout. To the extent that human beings achieve redemption, it is through their own efforts which, eventually, in the course of time get crowned with success.

R. Hiyya b. Abba, on the other hand, looks at redemption apocalyptically, with a sharp rupture taking place between a “before” and an “after.” His apocalypticism suggests the emergence of a transvaluation of values in the age of redemption which reorders our priorities and perceptions concerning how human mastery is to be achieved. Maimonides’ formulation of the law of the Mishnah in *Shabbat* 63a in his *Code* — “One may not take out military weapons of any kind into a public domain on the Sabbath” — bespeaks R. Hiyya b. Abba’s philosophy of redemption. In this grossly unredeemed world — full of explosive tensions and hostilities — one may not walk out with military weapons because they are not a *Takhshit* — they are not an ornament. Since they are *Be’telin Li’yemot Hamashiah* — they will cease in the days of the Messiah — they are prohibited now, in this unredeemed world. How does one go about redeeming an unredeemed world? The implicit answer of the anonymous majority view of the Mishnah in *Shabbat* — and codified by Maimonides as legally binding upon Jews — is by enacting a little bit of redemption now in the grossly unpropitious circumstances of our world.

The view espoused by the anonymous majority and codified by Maimonides is reminiscent of Jacques Ellul’s vision of redemption as set forth in his book, *The Presence of the Kingdom*.

What actually matters (he says) is to be and not to act. . . . The prophet (he says) is not one who confines himself to foretelling with more or less precision an event more or less distant; he is one who already “lives” it, and already makes it actual and present in his own environment.⁷

I think that the Mishnaic formulation — and Maimonides’ paraphrase of it — are written in the same spirit. *Le’karev et ha’geulah* — to bring redemption a little closer — one has to approximate in the present in his/her individual action to that collective state of affairs where the action one is engaging in would be the societal norm.

This brings me to one final point. Towards the conclusion of his classic essay, “Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism,” Gershom Scholem criticizes the Messianic idea as inherently alienating. “The magnitude of the Messianic idea,” he says, “corresponds to the endless powerlessness in Jewish history during all the centuries of exile, when it was unprepared to come forward onto the plane of world history.”⁸ If my exposition of Maimonides’ conception of Messianism is at all correct

7. Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, tr. Olive Wyon (New York: Seabury, 1967), pp. 90, 50.

8. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 35.

then we can see how Scholem's criticism fails, at least with regard to Maimonides. In Maimonides' hands, Messianism becomes an enabling rather than an alienating doctrine. As Scholem himself emphasizes in an earlier section of his essay, the activist stress in Maimonides "will allow only one criterion [for the Messianic age]: whether the Messiah succeeds in his endeavors. The Messiah must prove his identity to justified skeptics not by cosmic signs and miracles but by historical success."⁹ The complementary tendency to this that I have tried to argue in this paper is the individualized enactment of the mores of the Messianic age prior to the actual ushering in of it by way of hastening its arrival. Whether it is a militancy of assertion or a militancy of withdrawal, the Messianic idea in Maimonides' hands becomes a spur to human resourcefulness to tap all of our strategies by way of historically actualizing mankind's most cherished dreams of peace and self-mastery.

9. Ibid., p. 30.

Climate and Health: Classical and Talmudic Perspectives

STEPHEN NEWMYER

IN 1982, WITH THE PUBLICATION OF FREDERICK Sargent's *Hippocratic Heritage: A History of Ideas about Weather and Human Health*,¹ a question was once again taken up which has long fascinated students of the history of medicine. Not since the appearance of Clarence Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*² have theories of the influence of climate on the human species been treated so exhaustively in a historical work.³ Sargent correctly emphasizes that, while mankind probably speculated on the link between weather conditions and health long before the earliest records indicate, the doctrines of Hippocrates must dominate in any study of medical climatology since "... without a doubt the ideas of this Greek physician represent the first climax in the nearly five millenia of written records that were available for study and all who followed really only extended and finally verified his original observations."⁴

The Hippocratic work upon which a consideration of the effects of climate on health must rest is the much-studied *Airs, Waters, Places*, a work which, as both Glacken and Sargent demonstrate, has exercised an almost incalculable influence on climatological thinking since antiquity. Sargent includes a brief consideration of potential borrowing from Hippocratic teachings on climate in the Hindu medical system, which flourished at a time roughly contemporaneous with the Hippocratic school on the island of Cos. While Sargent concludes that the likelihood of borrowing is small, due to the essentially rudimentary conception of climatological factors upon health in Hindu medical literature,⁵ the fact that Sargent raises the

1. Frederick Sargent II, *Hippocratic Heritage: A History of Ideas about Weather and Human Health* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

2. Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967).

3. Glacken is primarily interested in the alleged influence of climate upon human intelligence, which forms the subject of the latter half (Chapters XII-XXIV) of the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places*, while Sargent concerns himself with the matter of the influence of climate upon health, the subject of the first half of the Hippocratic work (Chapters I-XI). Both authors, however, take *Airs, Waters, Places* as the starting point for their studies and are principally concerned with analyzing the influence of that treatise on subsequent thought.

4. Sargent, p. xxvi.

5. Sargent, p. 61.

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question of cross-cultural borrowing in ancient medical theory is significant. He has chosen to focus upon similarities in thinking between Greeks and Indians but leaves the much more fully documented cultural encounter between Greeks and Jews in the Hellenistic period totally out of consideration. This is in keeping with a general tendency among writers on medical history to ignore the rather abundant medical material scattered throughout the Talmud, not the least interesting aspect of which is the highly-developed conception of medical climatology, that branch of medical science which explores the influence of climate upon health. Of all ancient nations whose medical beliefs and practices are known in any detail, the Greeks and Jews express themselves at greatest length on the connection between climate and health. It is surprising, therefore, that medical historians have ignored the question of potential cross-cultural borrowing in this area of medical science, and that, indeed, even Jewish medical writers have left untouched the Talmudic doctrines on medical climatology.⁶ This study seeks to remedy that situation through a comparative examination of Jewish and Greek theories on the influence of climate upon health. Beginning with a consideration of Jewish and Greek views on man's place in the ecosystem, which deeply influenced the medical climatology of both cultures, we shall investigate Jewish and Greek ideas on the effects of air, water and location on human health as these ideas are revealed for the Greeks in the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places* and in the Greek medical thinkers dependent upon Hippocrates, and for the Jews in the Talmud. Finally, we shall attempt to assess the possibility of rabbinic familiarity with, and use of, Greek environmental theory.

The neglect accorded to Jewish sources by historians of medicine is especially to be regretted in the case of environmental theory in view of the acute sense of obligation toward the environment which is always presupposed in rabbinic pronouncements on the effects of air, water and places on human health. The current ecological crisis prompted several Jewish scholars in the last decade to treat the Jewish attitude toward man's place in the environment with interesting results for the student of ancient medicine.⁷ A key to understanding the Jewish attitude toward man's proper stance with relation to the world and his fellow creatures is contained in the biblical injunction termed *bal tashhit*, "you shall not wan-

6. The classic study of biblical and Talmudic medicine, Julius Preuss, *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Heilkunde und der Kultur* (Berlin: Karger, 1921; translated by Fred Rosner, as *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine* [New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1978]), in which virtually every medical phenomenon imaginable is discussed, is curiously silent on medical climatology.

7. Among these studies may be mentioned Ralph Pelcovitz, "Ecology and Jewish Theology," *Jewish Life* 37 (1970): 23-32; Eric G. Freudenstein, "Ecology and the Jewish Tradition," *JUDAISM* 19 (1970): 406-414; and Jonathan I. Helfand, "Ecology and the Jewish Tradition: A Postscript," *JUDAISM* 20 (1971): 330-335, a rejoinder to Freudenstein's article.

tonly destroy.” The biblical source for this principle is Deuteronomy 20:19, in which the Lord forbids the unnecessary destruction of trees in wartime. This principle was frequently invoked by the Talmudists and was interpreted by them to apply to man’s use of air, water and land alike, enjoining upon him a strict regard for the welfare and preservation of the world around him. Hence, while man may have been commanded by God to subdue and dominate all creatures (Exodus 1:28), he must remain aware that God may exercise some special control over His world of which man remains unaware.⁸ Man must, therefore, temper his desire to dominate with a willingness to live in harmony.⁹ For man to pollute the air, water or land, in violation of *bal tashhit*, is, therefore, not merely foolish but sacrilegious as well.

A second general injunction of Jewish law pertinent to environmental questions, specifically those relating to proper land use, is that termed *yishuv ha-arez*, “the dwelling [in] the land,” a principle based on Numbers 33:53, wherein the Lord instructs the Jews to take possession of the land of Israel. This principle was invoked by the Talmudic Rabbis specifically on questions concerning the settling of the land, but the various Talmudic enactments concerning urban planning and land use included in its operation have wider ecological implications. Both doctrines reflect the overriding sense of community welfare which motivated the pious Jew in his dealings with his environment, an attitude which envisioned the human being as the agent responsible for maintaining the life of the world which he shared with other creatures. In Talmudic thinking, man dominates but sustains as well.

Biblical and Talmudic sources tend to regard medical questions, including environmental problems, as inseparable from religious and moral considerations. Greek science of the classical period (fifth century B.C.E.) adopts a quite different stance. Hippocrates and his medical school fought hard to divorce science from its earlier connections with magic and religion. In pre-Hippocratic Greek texts, however, it is clear that air, water and many of nature’s loveliest locations were felt to be imbued with spirits not always well disposed to the incursions of man. Consequently, the Greeks adopted a cautious and reverential attitude toward the out-of-doors which was rooted not so much in an ecological

8. So Pelcovitz, p. 25, expresses this idea, “. . . Beyond the control of man over nature there is a higher control, a Divine one, whereby God’s purpose and objective is served and with which man has no right to interfere.”

9. Tractate *Abot*, mishnah 1, sees self-control as real mastery. “Who is he that is mighty? He who subdues his evil inclination, as it is said, He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” All translations from the Talmud in this paper are taken from *The Babylonian Talmud*, translated into English with notes, glossary, and indices under the editorship of Dr. I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1935; reissued 1948).

consciousness as in a fear of divine retribution for transgressions against nature.

Pre-Hippocratic Greek literature is not without pronouncements which appear to be grounded in ecological considerations. One might think, for example, of Hesiod's prohibition in *Works and Days* against urinating along a road¹⁰ as such an ecological principle were it not followed immediately by the correct directions for relieving oneself so as not to offend the gods,¹¹ a statement which identifies Hesiod's apparent ecology as a religious taboo and not as motivated by concern for the preservation of the environment. The work of the pre-Socratics signaled a movement away from a religious to a rational attitude toward nature. While still deeply interested in the question of the divinity of the universe, these thinkers, purely through the use of reason, sought to uncover the basic substance from which the cosmos was fashioned and, thereby, laid the foundation for the attitude of Hippocratic science. Hippocrates believed that the processes of health and disease could be understood and dealt with rationally, without the need to assume divine intervention. The classic formulation of this view is contained in his treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, in which the author argues that epilepsy, the sacred disease, is neither more nor less sacred than any other disease, the implication being that no disease is sacred at all.¹² A similar attitude toward scientific matters is evident in *Airs, Waters, Places*, whose second chapter counsels the physician to study the environment into which he is going so that he will not be at a loss in treating diseases there, which might happen if he were not sufficiently educated in local climatic conditions.¹³ The pronounced pride which the Hippocratic physician takes in this open-eyed, scientific stance is revealed further on in Chapter II, where it is stated that the physician who observes all indications in a strange environment will not make mistakes but will, rather, secure the greatest successes. In the Hippocratic view, man, through his ability to reason, is master of the environment.

As was true of all branches of Hippocratic science, the school's climatological teaching assumed the operation of the four bodily humors (*chymoi*), phlegm, black bile, yellow bile, and blood which, while not intrin-

10. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge: Harvard, 1977), verse 729, "And do not make water as you go, whether on the road or off the road."

11. Ibid., verse 731, "A scrupulous man who has a wise heart sits down or goes to the wall of an enclosed court."

12. Hippocrates, *On the Sacred Disease*, I, translated by W.H.S. Jones (London: Heinemann, 1923), II, p. 139, "It is not, in my opinion, any more divine or sacred than other diseases, but has a natural cause. . . ."

13. Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places*, II, translated by W.H.S. Jones (London: Heinemann, 1972; reprint of the edition of 1923), I, p. 73, "Using this evidence he must examine the several problems that arise. For if a physician know these things well, by preference all of them, but at any rate most, he will not, on arrival at a town with which he is unfamiliar, be ignorant of the local diseases, or of the nature of those that commonly prevail; so that he will not be at a loss in the treatment of diseases, or make blunders. . . ."

sically pathogenic, caused disease when invading a part of the body in excessive concentration. Each humor was felt to be particularly affected by certain weather conditions. Hence, a city which was exposed to hot winds had phlegmatic inhabitants, while one exposed to cold winds necessarily had bilious inhabitants.¹⁴ Again, the operation of the humors was reckoned to be totally independent of divine intervention.

Far from implying a religious concern for environment or even a reverential attitude toward the ecosystem, the treatise *Airs, Waters, Places* is, in fact, a practical handbook intended to give the physician useful advice in dealing with unfamiliar environmental conditions. George Rosen, in his work *A History of Public Health*, has noted that, alongside the more theoretical anthropological considerations which motivate, in particular, the second half of the treatise, *Airs, Waters, Places* was intended to offer advice to two classes of Greeks who might find it necessary to resettle in a strange environment, namely those establishing colonies and peripatetic physicians encountering a strange environment for the first time.¹⁵

Diaspora Jews, colonizers by necessity, were in a unique position to develop an appreciation for foreign environments and their health consequences in the manner envisioned in *Airs, Waters, Places*, and Jewish literature bears frequent witness to an acute understanding of the effects of foreign climates on human health. In a midrash on Psalm 137:1, the commentator, explaining the biblical verse, "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept," writes,

What made the children of Israel sit down and weep by the rivers of Babylon? R. Johanan explained: It was the Euphrates which slew more of the children of Israel than the wicked Nebuchadnezzar had slain. While the children of Israel were living in the Land of Israel, they drank only rain water, running water, or spring water. But when they were exiled to Babylon, they drank from the waters of the Euphrates, and many of them died.¹⁶

In the face of such potential dangers, the Talmudists cautioned their physicians to arm themselves in advance with a knowledge of the local climate if they were called upon to treat patients in strange cities. The tractate *Baba Kama* (85a) contains a passage which appears to bear upon the question of a physician's entering a strange environment. The statement is that if a physician must be summoned from a distance, "the eye will be

14. Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places*, III-IV.

15. George Rosen, *A History of Public Health* (New York: MD Publications, 1958), p. 34.

16. *The Midrash on Psalms*, translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by William G. Braude (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), Volume 2, p. 332. Babylon is singled out repeatedly by the Rabbis as dangerous to health. A number of such statements on Babylon appear to date from the first few centuries C.E., when the Rabbis were alarmed at the rate of emigration from Palestine on the part of Jews eager to escape the high taxes of Palestine. Hence, some objections to Babylon and other foreign climates may be more economic than medical in motivation.

blind before he arrives." *Whose* eye is referred to is not clear. If the passage is understood in a more literal sense it may be saying that if a physician must come into a place with which he is unfamiliar, he may arrive too late to save the patient's eye. Understood in a more metaphorical sense, the eye of the physician may be meant. The physician who travels with no concern for local conditions will arrive with an eye blinded to what he might expect to encounter.¹⁷

In view of the rather similar conceptions of the physician's behavior in strange locales which Greek and Jewish sources seem to demonstrate, it is natural to ask whether the environmental theory of antiquity's most influential medical school shares any similarities with the theory of the Jews, upon whom the Greeks exercised so strong an appeal in so many areas. Several sorts of evidence suggest an acquaintance with Greek medicine on the part of the Rabbis. First of these is the matter of the origin of rabbinic medical training. Some of the Rabbis quoted in the Talmud were practicing physicians whose training might have been acquired in part in Greek medical schools or, at least, enhanced through discussions with Greek medical personalities. J. Snowman has argued that medical knowledge was, for ancient Jews, the most attractive type of Greek learning.

The Rabbis of the period participated in this struggle [between Hellenism and Jewish culture in Palestine], they were deeply interested — not always favorably — in Greek philosophy, poetry, drama; and Medicine made a special appeal to them because of its application to many legal, ritual and ecclesiastical ordinances of Judaism.¹⁸

The Talmud bears witness to this willingness on the part of the Rabbis to entertain gentile opinions on scientific matters. In tractate *Pesahim* (94b) a debate is recounted in which the Jewish and Greek opinions as to the movements of the heavens are set forth. The Rabbis are quoted as holding that the sun travels beneath the sky by day and above the sky by night, while gentile scientists maintain that the sun travels beneath the sky by day and below the earth at night. On this Rabbi Judah the Prince concludes, "And their view is preferable to ours, for the wells are cold by day and warm by night." If the Rabbis, some of whom possessed expertise in both medicine and astronomy, were willing to accept pagan opinions in astronomical questions, it is not impossible that they might have accepted other gentile opinions of a scientific nature.

It has long been recognized, moreover, that the medical vocabulary of the Talmud is heavily influenced by Greek scientific terminology. In

17. The modern authority on medicine in the Talmud, Fred Rosner, *Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud* (New York: Ktav, 1977), favors this more metaphorical interpretation, p. 14, "Elsewhere in this tractate (85a) patients are advised not to consult a physician from abroad because such a person would not have the needed knowledge of local environment and climatic conditions."

18. J. Snowman, *A Short History of Talmudic Medicine* (New York: Hermon Press, 1974; reprint of the edition of 1935), p. 7.

the last century, Samuel Krauss pointed out the substantial use of Greek terms in Talmudic medical discussions.¹⁹ In the sum total of the borrowings from Greek terminology in rabbinic literature which Krauss isolated, 122 words may be identified as dealing with medical categories (doctoring, illnesses, cures, bodily functions, and parts of the body).

There is, in addition, some evidence that the Rabbis may have been acquainted with the Hippocratic humoral theory. In tractate *Sotah* (5b), one finds this interesting remark; R. Johanan said, "The word for man [*adam*] indicates dust, blood and gall." Rabbi Johanan sees the name as a combination of the words *adamah*, "earth," *dam*, "blood", and *mar*, "bitter." Blood and the two types of gall were reckoned as three of the four Hippocratic humors. In tractate *Baba Kama* (92b), moreover, it is claimed that 83 types of disease result from *maḥalah*, "gall," a statement that calls to mind the Hippocratic notion of disease as being caused by the domination of one humor over the others. The term for gall in this latter passage, *maḥalah*, may be etymologically related to the Greek term *chole*, "gall."

Yet another avenue through which Hippocratic climatology might have become known to Jewish sages is the group of medical sects which grew from the school of Hippocrates in the Hellenistic period and culminated in the person of Claudius Galen (ca. 129-199 C.E.). These sects appropriated Hippocratic climatological theory as well as the humoral doctrine upon which it was based. With the passage of centuries, that doctrine became dogma whose hold upon medical science lasted until the nineteenth century. The earliest of the sects, the Empirics, was vitally interested in environment and argued that medical treatment was habitat-specific, requiring a thorough understanding of local conditions in prescribing a regimen for a patient.²⁰ Likewise, the so-called Pneumatists, whose school was founded about 50 C.E., emphasized, as their name implies, the action of air (*pneuma*) in maintaining health. They studied the air of valleys, marshes, and the seaside for its effect on disease.

19. Samuel Krauss, *Griechische und Lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrash und Targum, mit Bemerkungen von Immanuel Löw* (Berlin: S. Calvary and Co., 1899), 2 volumes. The volumes of Krauss must be used with some caution as the author tended to be somewhat enthusiastic in his attribution of the term "borrowing." Löw, who prepared the *Nachträge* and *Sachregister* in which the identified borrowings are classified, takes issue with a number of Krauss' attributions, cf. especially the *Vorbemerkung* to the *Sachregister*, Volume 2, pp. 619-622. Löw would distinguish more carefully than does Krauss between real borrowed words and mere transcriptions of Greek words that had not been taken into Hebrew parlance, and he brands certain of Krauss' identifications as impossible. Despite Löw's reservations, the evidence for use of Greek scientific terminology in the Talmud remains impressive.

20. Sargent, p. 18. On the post-Hippocratic medical sects see especially R.O. Moon, *Hippocrates and his Successors in Relation to the Philosophy of their Time* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1923; reprinted New York: AMS Press, 1979). Moon discusses the influence of *Airs, Waters, Places* on the post-Hippocratic sects on pp. 20-21.

It was Galen, however, whose version of Hippocratic medicine became dogma to the centuries after him who enthroned Hippocratic environmental and humoral doctrine as truth. While he may not have added much to the earlier statement of environmental medicine, his restatement of it may well have been familiar to Jewish physicians. It is known that Galen was acquainted with Jewish doctors and that he had many Jewish clients. He mentions the Jews in five passages.²¹ Judging from his everyday associations with Jews, it is certainly possible that they acquired increased familiarity with Hippocratic theory from him.

In the complete absence of references to Hippocrates and Galen by name in the Talmud,²² and the general difficulty of dating scientific pronouncements in the Talmud, we must be content to leave it as a strong possibility that the Talmudists were acquainted with the doctrines of Hippocratic medicine. If the Rabbis studied at all in Alexandrian schools of medicine or conversed at all with Greek physicians, they would very likely have gained some familiarity with Greek environmental science.

What ideas, then, could the Jews have encountered in that portion of *Airs, Waters, Places* which deals with the relation of climate to health (Chapters I-XI)? They would have observed two overriding intellectual tendencies which characterized all aspects of Hippocratic medicine: a holistic view of environment in which air, water, and location are intimately connected in the production and destruction of human health, and a rather schematized overall view of environment which reflects the Greek predilection for neat categorization. Hence, in the Hippocratic scheme the diseases observable in a climate ruled by hot winds are seldom in a climate ruled by cold winds. Only infrequently is a given disease said to flourish in opposite climates. In a manner likewise typical of the Greek fondness for dialectical differentiations, cities with winds that are neither too hot nor too cold are labeled healthiest due to the variety of weather which they experience (Chapter V).

Water is accorded somewhat lengthier coverage (Chapters VII-IX) than is air, and the author of the treatise specifically states (Chapter VII) that the influence of water is paramount in considerations of health. Waters from high places are declared to be the most conducive to health

21. The references to Jews in Galen's works *De Usu Partium* (XI. 14) and *De Pulsuum Differentiis* (II. 4 and III. 3) are translated with commentary in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, ed. with Introduction, Translations and Commentary. Volume II: from Tacitus to Simplicius (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980), along with the remaining two passages, extant only in Arabic translation, pp. 306-328. On Galen's connections with the Jews, Stern writes, p. 309, "The references to the Jews by Galen do not necessitate the assumption of a solid knowledge of Judaism. In his place of residence, Galen had certainly met Jews, and presumably not a few of his patients and some of his colleagues were Jews."

22. Of pagan intellectuals, the Rabbis in the Talmud mention only Epicurus and the Cynic philosopher Oenomaus of Gadara. The lack of specific reference does not, in itself, preclude the possibility of familiarity with pagan authors.

(Chapter VII), and hard waters with mineral deposits most unhealthy (Chapter VII). Rain water and snow water are considered by the Hippocratic author to be preferable to spring water because the salt content of rain water is the lowest due to the action of the sun which draws to itself the finest part of water and leaves the salt behind (Chapter VIII). The author cautions the reader to avoid drinking water coming from many different sources, or water from large rivers, or from foreign waters coming from a great distance, as these cause kidney stones, strangury, and sciatica (Chapter IX).

Location and its relation to good health is treated incidentally throughout the first half of *Airs, Waters, Places*. The main point that the author makes with regard to city location is that those facing the sunrise are healthiest. To Hippocrates' observations, Galen, in his treatise *On Hygiene*, added several interesting corollaries based on hints in Hippocrates. Galen is much more specific about the relation of air and the set-up of towns:

But as for air, it is advantageous to breathe the best at all ages equally. I consider the best air that which is absolutely pure. And pure air is that which is not defiled by the exhalation from pools or marshes or from a pit giving off deleterious vapor. . . . And likewise whatever air is defined from any sewer of those draining any large city or populous camp is harmful, and harmful too is that which is contaminated from any putrefaction of animals or vegetables or oils or manure; and that is not good which is cloudy from a neighboring river or swamp; and likewise that which, in a hollow place, surrounded on all sides by lofty mountains, receives no breeze, for such air is stifling and foul, like that in certain closed houses in which it collects from putrefaction and lack of ventilation. Such air is injurious at all ages, as absolutely pure air is beneficial at all ages.²³

One would look in vain in the Talmud for so coherent and schematic a treatment of the effects of climate upon health as one finds in Hippocrates and Galen, since references to this question are scattered throughout. However, taken together, these stray pronouncements form an impressive body of doctrine and suggest much reflection on medical climatology, some of which is highly reminiscent of ideas observable in Greek medicine. The specific aspects of climatic medicine upon which the Rabbis choose to comment and their approach toward these matters is, in some ways, very similar to the Greek treatment. Yet the religious dimension, intentionally absent from Greek medical literature, is never far from the minds of the Rabbis and climatological pronouncements, however sound they may strike one as medical theory, are sometimes motivated by considerations more religious and moral than medical.

Not the least striking parallel in outlook between Greek and Jewish medicine is the mistrust of the effects of foreign climates on human

23. Galen, *Galen's Hygiene (De Sanitate Tuenda)*, translated by Robert Montraville Green (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1951), pp. 35-36.

health. Strict ordinances regulating Jewish conduct with respect to foreign air and land were legislated by the Rabbis. Land outside Israel was declared ritually unclean because inhabitants of non-Jewish nations were careless in the disposal of their dead. Rabbi Jose ben Johanan held that the lands outside Israel were ritually unclean because one could readily come upon bones from dead bodies in their soil, which rendered the soil unclean even if the bones were only so large as a grain of barley (*Shabbat* 15b). Before the destruction of the Second Temple, an enactment was made which declared even the air outside of Israel to be ritually unclean. Various reasons have been suggested to account for this ordinance. It may have been felt that since those who were drowned in the Deluge died outside Israel, which was not flooded, the air outside was, therefore, unclean. On the other hand, the ordinance may have been due to the belief that because many Jews died outside of Israel, the presence of their bodies may have rendered the air unclean.²⁴ The motivation for the declaration of ritual uncleanness may also rest totally outside religious considerations, in a desire on the part of the Rabbis to discourage emigration from the Holy Land at a time when economic conditions there were difficult.

The school of Hippocrates and the Jewish sources seem agreed in considering water the most significant potential health hazard to be encountered in a strange environment. Hippocrates' caution against drinking water that comes from afar and from large rivers recalls the midrash on the dangers of the waters of the Euphrates discussed above. Both cultures also praise rain water and spring water over river water for preserving health. Similar in viewpoint is a passage in tractate *Ta'anit* (9b) which discusses at some length the quality and quantity of the rainfall of various nations. The rainfall of Palestine is pronounced to be superior to that of other nations because Palestine gets its water from God and the other nations get theirs merely from messengers of God. Moreover, "Palestine is watered by the rain and then the rest of the world is watered by the residue" (*Ta'anit* 9b).

Foreign climates were reckoned by the Rabbis to be unpredictable as well as harmful. In the passage quoted above from *Ta'anit*, it is also recorded (9b) that, "Ulla chanced to be in Babylon and observing light clouds . . . he exclaimed, 'Remove the vessels for rain is now coming.' No rain fell and he exclaimed, 'As the Babylonians are false, so too is their rain.'"

Rabbinic teaching on the medicinal properties of air, while agreeing in some particulars with Greek doctrine, is, in many respects, considerably more sophisticated than the Greek. The most noteworthy aspect of rabbinic teaching on the effects of air on health is the notion of disease-

24. *Encyclopedia Talmudica*, edited by Meyer Berlin, article "Land of the Nations" (Jerusalem: Talmudic Encyclopedia Institute, 1969), Volume II, column 742.

causing demons (*mazzikin*) which travel through air and water, spreading disease. Midsummer was reckoned an especially unhealthy time because intensely hot air encouraged the gathering of such spirits.²⁵ We have here a precursor of the modern theory of airborne bacterial contagion, a concept scarcely envisioned in even the best of Greco-Roman medical science.

The Rabbis placed high value on the salubrious effects of the air in high places, which seems to recall Galen's warnings against dwelling in valleys surrounded by mountains. Yet we may once again detect a religious motivation for a medical statement in the rabbinic emphasis upon elevated locations. In Jewish thought, high locations were considered to be especially favored by God because only the most elevated places were spared in the Deluge. Tractate *Ketubot* (104a), however, sees elevated locations as healthy in themselves. Here it is recounted that one Jewish sage who had fallen ill was taken to the lofty town of Sepphoris to recover by breathing its salubrious air.

The unique position which Jerusalem occupied in the eyes of pious Jews caused the Rabbis to pay particular attention to maintaining and enhancing the purity of its air. Cinnamon logs were burned in the city to lend a pleasant scent to the air, and tractate *Shabbat* (63a) reports on this point, "Rahabah said in R. Judah's name: The [fuel] logs of Jerusalem were of the cinnamon tree, and when lit their fragrance pervaded the whole of Eretz Israel." The air of other towns was also protected by rabbinic ordinance. The mishnah to *Baba Batra* 26b records that carrion animals, graves, and tanyards had to be kept fifty cubits from a town because of the noxious fumes which they gave off. The mishnah to *Baba Batra* 24b instructs on threshing-floors: "A fixed threshing-floor must be kept fifty cubits from a town. A man should not fix a threshing-floor on his own estate unless there is a clear space all round of fifty cubits." The gemara asks, "Why is a fixed threshing-floor kept fifty cubits away from a town? — To prevent it doing damage." It would strew chaff through the air, rendering it harmful to health.

Finally, Talmudic statements on the medical value of places hold a special interest for the student of ancient science because, when they are joined with rabbinic statements on the health-producing properties of air and water, they form a body of doctrine which can justifiably be said to constitute the rudiments of a philosophy of city planning, complete with zoning regulations for the maintenance of health. Rabbinic sensitivity to

25. Benjamin Lee Gordon, *Medicine throughout Antiquity* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1949), p. 750, sees wide-reaching implications to the rabbinic doctrine of *mazzikim*, "In the light of modern bacteriology and hygiene, the Talmudic conception of pathogenic demons is of much interest. Their mode of attack, their predilection for certain organs, their prevalence in certain localities and during certain seasons of the year, the symptoms they produced, and the measures taken for the prevention and cure of their attacks, might not be out of place in a modern book of hygiene."

matters of placement of objects and institutions within town limits is, to some degree, motivated by concern to abide by the injunctions of *bal tashhit* and *yishuv ha-arez*. Yet, so strongly was the need to preserve the beauty of Israel and the produce of its land that regard for living things took precedence even over considerations of the Temple sacrifice. Hence, a mishnah in tractate *Tamid* (29a) explains that all types of wood were suitable for use in the Temple sacrifice excepting vines and olive wood. In the gemara to the passage (29b), R. Aḥa ben Jacob is quoted as saying that these were excepted to preserve the amenities of the Land of Israel, thereby abiding by *bal tashhit* and *yishuv ha-arez* simultaneously since vines and olive trees, as fruit bearers, were necessary to the welfare of Israel and its inhabitants.

The longest continuous discussion of climatology in the Talmud deals with the health-promoting regulations passed for the Land of Israel (*Baba Kama* 80b-82b). Earlier in that tractate (79b), the mishnah specifies which animals could be bred there. Small cattle were forbidden because they spoil crops and hens because they defile their surroundings by pecking at dunghills. Dogs were to be kept on chains lest they wander about and their barking cause miscarriages in pregnant women. *Baba Kama* 80b-82b details the special regulations which obtained in Israel. Most interesting are those pertaining to Jerusalem proper. No dunghills were allowed there nor beams projecting from roofs, "... in order not to form a tent spreading defilement" (82b). Dunghills were prohibited because it was believed that they attracted snakes which could poison drinking water, a notion which motivated the Rabbis to forbid the leaving of open water vessels in public lest these encourage snakes to drink from them and thereby poison them (*Abodah Zarah* 30b). Gardens are disallowed in Jerusalem because withered grasses from them befoul the air. Kilns are forbidden because their smoke pollutes the air and discolors houses, a prohibition which recalls the ruling on the placement of tanyards. A final example of enlightened rabbinic city planning is the pronouncement of Rabbi Samuel ben Nahmani that a person who purchases a town in Israel may be compelled to buy the roads which lead to it on all four sides. This is because ready access to the town guarantees its prosperity (*Baba Kama* 80b).

Such enlightened thinking on the set-up of towns to assure the health of their citizens by taking full advantage of the strengths of the spot while altering the shortcomings, is not even hinted at in *Airs, Waters, Places*, nor, indeed, elsewhere in Greek medical literature. Galen, in *On Hygiene*, seems to demonstrate an appreciation of some of the principles of city planning envisioned by the Rabbis, but he stops far short of the rabbinic conception. The point of view of Greek medicine, even when, as in *Airs, Waters, Places*, it seeks to impart practical advice, tends to be largely abstract, in keeping with the heavily theoretical orientation of Greek science in general. The Rabbis, on the other hand, tend to keep

their eyes focused on particular situations while eschewing the purely abstract.

If, then, we ask ourselves the question of cross-cultural borrowing in the case of Greeks and Jews as Sargent had asked of Greeks and Indians, we may make several observations on the possible influence of Greek on Jewish climatology. Our investigation has suggested that if Hippocratic science was of any service to the Talmudists, it was so most particularly in the area of dealing effectively with foreign climates. The cautiousness which the two cultures demonstrate in approaching strange environments may be part of a xenophobia that characterized ancient nations in other areas as well. What is remarkable, however, is that these two cultures chose to adopt a strong positive stance toward such climates and to set down their views to benefit others. The *Airs, Waters, Places* is a document of "diaspora" Greek science, and it is in the area of dealing with foreign climates that Greek environmental medicine had the most to tell the Jews. Perhaps we may detect cross-cultural borrowing here, in outlook and in details alike.

The Greeks had little to tell the Jews about urban climatology, however, and the highly-developed Talmudic concept of city planning which we have noted is a product of religious faith and concern for the welfare of the totality of the environment. In the Greek sources, we miss the active and adaptive mentality which the Jews brought to their urban climatology.²⁶ In Jewish thinking, what is not most conducive to health may be altered, so long as this is done in accord with God's will. The Greek view is, in a sense, more passive and observational as might have been expected from a science which was always more given to ratiocination than experimentation. The two cultures were agreed that an intimate connection exists between climate and health, but their views differ on man's place in the world. The Greek teaches us to understand with our minds and, thereby, live in the world; the Jew teaches us to understand with our minds and hearts as well, and thereby live with the world.

26. That the Greeks possessed a deep affection for the beauties of the natural world cannot be denied. One may find appreciations of nature in all Greek literary genres; examples of these are gathered in Henry Rushton Fairclough, *Love of Nature among the Greeks and Romans* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963). Nor did the Greeks hesitate to change the appearance of the natural world to suit their purposes. What the Greeks lacked, however, was an active, consistent policy toward environmental change reflecting an awareness of potential negative consequences from change of the earth's appearance. Here we may note Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 122, "Although the notices from pre-Hellenistic times reveal an awareness of environmental change, they are isolated. In the ancient world as a whole, there is no lack of evidence regarding change, but interpretations of it are few. One learns of grafting, fertilizing, the laying-out of towns, but for the most part the facts are stated, and that is all."

The Polemic on Miracles

RUTH BIRNBAUM

MIRACLES, LIKE SALVATION AND SIN, ARE the language of religion. They demand faith, commitment, and receptivity. In Jewish history, there were two crucial periods when the credibility of miracles came into focus. One was during the classical talmudic age, which gave structure and form to normative Judaism; the other was during the eighteenth century, which challenged the fixed forms of normative Judaism and gave rise to Hasidism. Both periods signalled a regeneration of religious observances to bring divinity into daily practices and to elevate the banalities of man's existence onto a sacral plane.

Miracles, the evidence of a Divine will working in the affairs of man, were abundantly manifest in the Bible, where God was ever present to guide the Israelites towards their unique role as His chosen people. Nevertheless, belief in miracles was not deemed fundamental to the principles of Jewish faith and afforded no evidence of a heightened piety. Since the acceptance or rejection of miracles was never a creedal fiat in Judaism, several questions come to the fore: What, indeed, are the determining factors in the belief in miracles and why did it resurface as a polemical issue in the eighteenth century? Why did the inheritors of normative Judaism, the *Mitnaggedim* — (literally “opponents”) — level the charge of “miracle working”¹ against the Hasidic leaders when such activity already constituted part of the religious stock of the classical Sages? From the tenor of these accusations, the issue of miracles would seem to be neatly defined as being totally inconsistent with mainstream Judaism and collectively practiced by the Hasidic Masters. It will be shown herein, however, that dissenting attitudes regarding miracles prevailed during both periods — both among the Sages of the classical period, as well as within the ranks of eighteenth century Hasidic leaders. The case for a tidy alignment in the belief in miracles finds no support either in normative Judaism or in Hasidic literature. What does emerge from the evidence of both periods regarding the issue of miracles is a parallel polarity of credibility and incredibility.

One of the peak questions that the two periods grappled with was: which takes precedence, faith or miracles? In classical literature, there was considerable discussion concerning the miracle of the parting of the

1. Mordecai L. Wilensky, “Hasidic-Mitnaggedic Polemics in the Jewish Communities of East Central Europe,” reprinted from *Tolerance and Movements of Religious Dissent in Eastern Europe, East European Quarterly* (New York: Columbia Press, 1975), p. 92.

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Red Sea, regarded as the greatest of biblical miracles, as to which had primacy, faith which produced miracles, or miracles which evoked faith. As against one Sage's claim that the Israelites merited the parting of the Red Sea because of their faith in God, comes the counterclaim that the Israelites, having seen all the wonders which were wrought for them, how should they not have believed? Those who believed that faith based upon miracles was greater argued that miracles were wrought in the distant past for a deserving people but were no longer evident. The former generations merited prodigious events on account of their greater piety and their readiness to sacrifice their lives for the sanctity of God's Name. "In our generation," laments a fourth century Babylonian Amora, "we do not sacrifice our lives for the sanctity of God's Name."² On the other hand, supporting the position that faith without miracles is superior, a midrashic source states³ that the proselyte who saw none of the wondrous phenomena at Sinai and takes upon himself the yoke of Heaven of his own accord is dearer to God than all the Israelites. For had the Israelites not witnessed the thunders, lightnings, quaking mountains and resounding trumpets, they would not have accepted the Torah.

The controversy as to which took precedence — faith or miracles — occupied the minds of the Hasidim of the eighteenth century as well, and the evidence reveals that their responses were far from unilateral. The writer of the earliest legends about the Baal Shem Tov (the founder of Hasidism and frequently referred to by his acronym, the Besht), comments in his preface⁴ that, in order to be receptive to miracles, one must be sinless. Only the virtuous are privileged to discern redemptive signs and wonders, and if these revelations are beyond comprehension, a person should cling to faith alone. According to the writer, the Besht merited the awesome capacity both to perceive and to perform miracles. Rabbi Ephraim of Sudlikov, the grandson of the Besht, was convinced that his grandfather accomplished miracles because of his simple and unswerving faith rather than through any artful or magical means. A generation later, Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, the great grandson of the Besht, emphasizing the primacy of faith, is quoted as saying, "A man should believe in God by virtue of faith rather than miracles."⁵ Occasionally, there was someone to test the mettle of both features of Divine deliverance as in the account of the woman who asked the Belzer Rabbi to pray on her behalf: "But do you have faith in the efficacy of my prayer," he inquired? To which she responded, "The Israelites at the Red Sea were first saved and then believed." The Hasidic rabbi smiled and offered

2. T.B. *Berakhot* 20a.

3. Buber, ed., *Tanhuma, Lekh Lekha*, Para, 6 f.32a.

4. Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, eds., *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 3.

5. Louis I. Newman and Samuel Spitz, trs., *The Hasidic Anthology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 104.

prayer on her behalf.⁶ The inquiry as to which predominates, faith or miracles, apparently engaged the leaders of both periods and joins the list of indeterminates awaiting Elijah's proclamation.

To many believers, the world of nature was itself a miracle and a manifestation of God's providence. The design and harmony operating in the universe were a source of boundless wonder which was acknowledged both in talmudic sources and in hasidic literature. Hillel, in the first century, compared God's greatness in providing man with his daily bread to the miracle of the Red Sea. Elsewhere, in the Talmud, it is recorded that a sick person's recovery was a greater miracle than that which happened when Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah escaped from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3), thus evidently equating the heat which comes from fever to the heat of the fiery furnace. It was this awesome awareness of the Divine order permeating ordinary life that caused the early Sages to thank God in the prayers three times a day "for the miracles that are with us every day."

In the eighteenth century, the Besht brought a resurgence of sensitivity to a created world emanating its goodness to man. In the previous few centuries, Jewish learning in the great talmudic academies of Eastern Europe had degenerated into an arid and futile exercise in casuistry. Rabbinic scholars, steeped in hair-splitting *pilpul* for self-serving ends, closed their hearts and minds to the wonders existing in the natural world. The Besht, after many years of communing with nature and learning its secrets, reawakened in his followers an appreciation of God's miracles manifest in the daily pattern of existence — an appreciation which they expressed through enthusiasm in prayer and spontaneity in worship. One need only be receptive to God's beneficence to see that miracles were, indeed, purposefully effected through the regular channels of nature. The disciple of the Maggid of Mezeritch, like the Sage Hillel, considered God's provision to man of his daily victuals a source of wonder. When he saw a teamster about to drink brandy without saying a blessing, he exclaimed: "Do you realize by what miraculous laws God has produced the fruit of the soil before it became the drink which you enjoy?" The teamster promptly recited the blessing.⁷

While many saw the grandeur of God within the orderly design of the universe, there were others who saw God's power manifested in abrogating the laws of nature. This intrusion into nature was interpreted variously both as an attribute or a detriment to the merit of man. These bilateral views were evident both in classical rabbinic literature and in Hasidic sources. The Talmud relates that it once happened that a woman died, leaving her impoverished husband with a suckling child. He was too poor to afford a wet-nurse, and a miracle was wrought for him. His breasts

6. Ibid., p. 343.

7. Ibid., p. 20.

opened up like the breasts of a woman so that he could nurse the child. Reacting to this story, Rabbi Joseph said: "Behold how great this man was that such a miracle was performed for him." But Abaya objected: "On the contrary, how unworthy this man must have been that the world's order was changed on his account."⁸ It would be an arrogance in man to expect a miracle to be wrought on his behalf through a disruption in nature.

Parallel views were expressed by the Hasidic Masters. Rabbi Bunam of Przysucha believed it was God's prerogative to deviate from the laws of nature. Just as the Sabbath day may be desecrated to save human life, so, too, the Lord may perform miracles which seem to contradict the natural order. But, according to another Hasidic opinion, even God is reluctant to intrude into the normal workings of nature. Referring to the fact that Isaac sowed the land and was prosperous (Genesis 26.12), the Vorker Rabbi comments that God thanked Isaac for enabling Him to provide for the Patriarch in a natural manner. For had Isaac not worked his field, God would have been impelled to provide for him through supernatural means.⁹ Similarly, the Gerer Rabbi confided to his closest Hasidim that, "It were evil indeed were we in our time in such a position that we required miracles to be shown us."¹⁰ In one instance, the Ropshitzer Rabbi was so ashamed that he had made a miracle that he didn't emerge for three days.¹¹ For those who saw the greatness of the Creator in the cosmic scheme, a disturbance in the laws of nature was a sign, not of privilege, but of presumptive claims.

Although the Bible would be unthinkable without miracles, nevertheless, the Sages in the classical period made attempts to understand and rationalize interruptions in nature. It was felt that capriciousness in the harmony of the universe would detract from the grandeur of the Grand Designer and so, without ruling out miracles, the early Rabbis showed themselves to be subtle philosophers in declaring that the deviations in nature were special creations which were provided for at the Creation. God stamped them upon the world to unfold at the time they were needed in the future, and they would thus be included as part of the natural course of events. The tendency to rationalize miracles was evident also among the Hasidic Masters. When the Dzikover Rabbi inquired how it was possible for his deceased father to be present at the table of the Tzanzzer Rabbi, the latter replied: "My meaning was metaphorical, to be sure. I conducted the meal according to the custom of your revered father, the Ropshitzer."¹²

Eventually, the distinction between God as Principal who works mir-

8. T.B. *Shabbat* 53b.

9. *Hasidic Anthology*, p. 261.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

11. Jerome R. Mintz, *Legends of the Hasidim* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 183-184.

12. *Hasidic Anthology*, p. 261.

acles through his agents, and the agents who become miracle workers themselves became less apparent. Beginning with Elijah the Prophet, who effected his own miracles, the transmission of thaumaturgic powers was generally acknowledged and provided a viable rationale for the performance of miracles by the early Sages. Indeed, an examination of the classical sources reveals that some of the leading rabbis mentioned in the Talmud were described as miracle workers, yielding "a harvest of not less than two hundred and fifty miracles."¹³

When we meet this phenomenon in Hasidism, it is the Zaddik who becomes "the channel"¹⁴ through which Divine grace flows and through whom wonders are effected. The Koretzer Rabbi, a disciple of the Besht, "proved" by gematria that man contains the source of divinity and is, therefore, himself a vessel for a miracle. The method of his reckoning bears noting:

"Aleph" means the "Source, the leader." The word: "Ish" (Man) is composed of the "Aleph," and the word "Yesh" (There is). This signifies that there is in Man the Source, that Divinity abides in Man. "Aleph" read backwards is "Peleh," a "miracle." Thus we may also state: a miracle there is in man.¹⁵

A real Zaddik, it was believed, could accomplish whatever he desires, provided it was not against the Divine will. Hasidic followers were convinced that "The word of God was in the hands of the Baal Shem Tov. He decreed and it came to pass."¹⁶ The concept of the channeling of powers, moreover, led to the inexorable conclusion that, conversely, the working of miracles verified the claim of the Zaddik to a special heavenly status, that "he was nearer to God than any other living person." Such exalted rank carried with it a sense of *noblesse oblige*, as illustrated in the following account: When the Koznitzer Maggid was informed that an elderly woman had borne a son though she had not gone to a Rebbe for a blessing, he commented: "Well, what of it? The Lord is sometimes desirous of demonstrating that He can accomplish a miracle, the same as a Rebbe."¹⁷ With the Zaddik being thus ensconced as the dispenser of miracles, the Hasidic leaders were conscious of the disparity between human conjuration and heavenly-inspired acts. The Lizensker Rabbi explained it this way: When a magician works his wonders, he is aware that they are merely tricks. "But when a man of God is commanded to perform a miracle, he himself is greatly astonished at the wonder."¹⁸ The manipulations of practical Kabbalah were not to be confused with the authentic nature of the mystical religious experience. Accordingly, the Besht had outlawed any magical activity aimed at accelerating the Messi-

13. Max Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Blaisdell Publishing Co., 1965), p. 156 fn.

14. Samuel H. Dresner, *The Zaddik* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1960), p. 125.

15. *Hasidic Anthology*, p. 83.

16. Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Thought* (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1976), p. 97.

17. *Hasidic Anthology*, p. 260.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

anic era. It was to be achieved not through human divination but through Divine intention.

In the classical period, the watershed for the prominence and dependence upon miracles is related in the remarkable talmudic story wherein Rabbi Eliezer attempted, with no success, to convince his colleagues of the correctness of his opinion by performing a series of miracles. The Rabbis shrugged them off one by one. When he caused a carob tree to move a hundred yards, they said: "One does not adduce proof from a carob tree." When he caused the water of a canal to flow backward, they said: "Water cannot prove anything." And when a heavenly voice proclaimed in favor of Rabbi Eliezer's view, Rabbi Jeremiah boldly declared: "The Torah was given to us from Sinai. We pay no attention to a heavenly voice."¹⁹ Henceforth, halakhah, not miracles, was to be the accepted source of authority. Miracles invoked in support of truth had lost their significance in classical Jewish theology.

Similarly, among the more learned Hasidic leaders, there was also a weaning away from miracles. Emphasis was placed more on prayer and on the right path to be followed to cleave to God. The greatest miracle was to bring holiness into the heart of a Jew to enable him to pray properly to his Creator. The intensity of the worship should be such that "the worshiper should deem it a miracle that his soul has not departed from him, when it was so closely attached to its Maker."²⁰ The faithful were to be brought near to God through appropriate sermons and ethical teachings and not through the working of miracles. Eventually, a note of skepticism replaced credulity in the ability of the Hasidic Rabbis to work miracles: "I would like to know," said the Kotzker, speaking of another Rabbi, "if he is able to perform the miracle of making one real Hasid."²¹ Thus, unerring faith once again supplanted the primacy of miracles in religious awareness.

The correspondence of diverse attitudes between classical Judaism and Hasidism concerning miracles has been amply substantiated. The presence of miracles as desirable or undesirable features had its supporters and detractors in both periods, so that one must look elsewhere for the decisive factor in the polemics which provoked the Mitnaggedim to accuse the Hasidim of miracle working.

Gershom Scholem²² points to two fundamental urges in the Jewish soul, two creative currents of rabbinic Judaism manifesting themselves in Halakhah and Aggadah — in Law and Lore. The halakhic discipline, with its analytic and pedantic attention to the rational exposition of the law, found its adherents among the intellectual segment of Jewish scholars.

19. T.B. *Baba Mezia* 59b.

20. *Hasidic Anthology*, pp. 262, 508.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

22. Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1941), p. 28.

The aggadic impulse, with its emphasis on the emotional and imaginative elements of the Jewish psyche, appealed to the naive, credulous masses. Although many of the Rabbis were learned in traditional sources, they were, nonetheless, simple folk who preferred the intuitive aggadic approach.

An example of the tension and relation of Halakhah and Aggadah is well illustrated in the following talmudic account:

Rabbi Abbahu and Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba once chanced to come to a certain place where the former gave aggadic and the latter halakhic addresses. Everyone left Hiyya, and flocked to listen to Abbahu, so that Hiyya felt discouraged. Abbahu said to him: "I will tell you a parable: we are like two traders, one a jeweller and one a haberdasher: which of the two will attract the greater number of customers? Surely he who sells cheap articles."²³

Thus, the Sages already recognized two levels of religious consciousness: the cognitive and the affective. Although the rationalist strain predominated, there was never any fiat of faith which denied to the masses their childlike, spontaneous, and intimate response to a personal God who worked miracles. Credulity in miracles was, consequently, the stronghold of a primitive aggadic mind which, unaccustomed to theoretical abstractions, was more at home in the palpable concreteness of a perceptible world. The oft-repeated talmudic statement regarding anthropomorphisms in the Bible, "The Torah speaks in the language of man," was a bridge connecting these two realities. The medieval rationalists, Saadia and Maimonides, had clearly recognized these two levels, yielding to the admission that revelation and miracles were required for the spontaneous religious life of the masses, inasmuch as verification through reason was too lengthy and would be accessible only to the few. The determining factor in the belief in miracles was, therefore, the individual's innate propensity towards theory or theophany.

In eighteenth-century Eastern Europe, these two impulses of the Jewish soul, the intellectual and the emotional, were completely severed. In such a hiatus, where one reality totally ignores the existence of the other, new movements tend to spring up. The disasters of the Chmielnicki decade of 1648-1658 had brought a deterioration in Jewish culture. Talmudic learning became concentrated in a narrow circle of urban Jewish scholars far removed from the villages of the Polish Ukraine, Podolia, and Volhynia. While the rabbinic community indulged in the mental gymnastics of casuistry, the impoverished masses were abandoned to ignorance and superstition. Hasidism, with its emotional appeal to the heart rather than the head, brought resuscitation to the uneducated and neglected Jews of the Polish provinces. Their simple, uncluttered view of the world provided a rife breeding ground for the miracles, wonders, and marvels performed by a charismatic Hasidic Master who cared for

23. T.B. *Sotah*, 40a.

them — a Zaddik who became for them the “personification of the Torah,”²⁴ providing them with an umbilical cord back to God.

This imbalance between the heart and the mind existed not only between the learned and the unlearned classes, but among the intellectuals as well. Many of the Besht’s early adherents were recruited from the rabbinic establishment as is evidenced by the account of the conversion to Hasidism of Rabbi Dov Baer, “a most acute scholar,” who came out of curiosity to test the spiritual mettle of the Besht. The Rabbi expounded a passage from the *Etz Hayyim*, a famous kabbalistic work of Rabbi Hayyim Vital (1542-1620), challenging the Besht to do the same. The latter proceeded to recite the text in such a way “that the whole house was filled with light, the fire burned around it, and they actually saw the angels mentioned in the text.” When he finished, the Baal Shem Tov commented to Rabbi Dov Baer: “It is true that the meaning of the text was as you stated it to be, but your study of the text had no soul in it.”²⁵ Thereafter Rabbi Dov Baer became a disciple of the Besht. The Besht, with his simple parabolic style, his burning enthusiasm, and his mystical fervor restored the missing dynamic element to a static Judaism.

Since it has already been demonstrated that miracle working had parallel developments in the classical rabbinic period, the accusation and furor over miracle working in the eighteenth century must be adduced from other determinations.

Max Kadushin makes the observation²⁶ that the decline in miracles in the early centuries paralleled the growth of Christianity. The new religion, originating as a heresy within the ranks of Judaism, strongly predicated its authenticity on the miracles performed by Jesus. Since miracles could be used to prove the truth of any religion, the Rabbis were quite justified in ruling them out as a source of authority. The conditions which threatened the internal cohesion of Judaism at the time of the Christian apostasy in the first century, similarly prevailed at the height of the Mitnaggedic-Hasidic controversy in the eighteenth century. The shadow of the Sabbatian heresy hung heavily over the Besht’s rise to prominence precisely at the time when Polish Jewry was traumatized by its experience with Jacob Frank and his followers, a Sabbatian sect which eventually converted to Christianity. The discrediting link between Hasidism and Sabbatianism, while only alluded to by such zealous Mitnaggedic writers as Rabbi David of Makov and Rabbi Israel Loebel, is forcefully provided by Gershom Scholem. He claims that Rabbi Adam, from whom the Besht received his secret documents, was no other than Rabbi Heshel Zoref, “one of the outstanding prophets of moderate Sabbatianism.”²⁷

24. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 344.

25. *Hasidic Thought*, p. 4.

26. *The Rabbinic Mind*, p. 167.

27. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 332-333.

The phenomenon of miracle working in particular was looked upon as a continuation of Sabbatianism. The same tendency towards deification which characterized the two schisms of Christianity and Sabbatianism flagrantly manifested itself among the more pneumatic Zaddikim. This threat to basic Jewish belief did not go unrecognized by the Hasidic leaders. They reacted with equal indignation as evidenced by the following accounts:

Rabbi Baruch of Medziboz was informed of the many miracles accredited to the Lizensker. He said: "How utterly useless they are! When Elijah performed miracles, we are told that the people exclaimed: 'The Lord is God.' But nowadays the people grow enthusiastic over the reputed miracle-worker, and forget entirely to say: 'The Lord is God.'"

The Riziner said: "The more miracles are attributed to the Zaddikim, the more the ground is prepared for deception by clairvoyants, fortune-tellers and charlatan doctors. A Zaddik should merely offer prayer to the Lord, and if he is a true Zaddik, his prayer will be heard."²⁸

Self-deification, which produced the heresies of Christianity and Sabbatianism, was a self-admitted temptation to the Besht as well. But whereas Shabbetai Tsevi succumbed to the cardinal sin, the Besht was able to withstand the supreme test. Rabbi Joel tells the story:

Once the Besht was asleep, and Shabbetai Tsevi, may his name be blotted out, came and attempted to tempt him again, God forbid. With a mighty thrust the Besht hurled him to the bottom of hell. The Besht peered down and saw that he landed on the same pallet with Jesus.²⁹

The heretical connection which threatened both the rabbinic and Hasidic periods is herein clearly established by the Besht. The predilection for power is an ever present enticement in the charismatic personality. Israel Baal Shem Tov, in avoiding the fatal flaw, left the way open for an eventual reconciliation between normative Judaism and Hasidism.

28. *Hasidic Anthology*, p. 262.

29. *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, "The Besht and Shabbetai Tsevi," pp. 86-87.

An Exploration of Gemilut Hasadim

JACK D. SPIRO

“As one hand washes another, so must one person help another.”

Leon da Modena

THE THEOLOGY OF *GEMILUT HASADIM* IS ESSENTIAL to an understanding of community, and the caring involved is basic to Jewish survival. *Gemilut hasadim* can best be explained through an examination of its origins, its relationship to *zedakah*, its connection to *middat hasidut*, and its source of obligation.

I. Origins

Gemilut hasadim is not a biblical concept, but, like many rabbinic ideas, however innovative or original, is derived from the Bible, from the notion of *hesed*.¹ Though *Gemilut hasadim* is considered a rabbinic concept, it would be more accurate to call it “extra-canonical,” for though it is not in the Bible, it is coterminous with parts of the Bible. It is, thus, an extremely early idea, at least 200 years before the inception of the rabbinic office.

The earliest reference to *gemilut hasadim* appears to be a statement by Shimon Hazaddik, who was either Shimon ben Onias I, high priest from 310 to 291 B.C.E., or his grandson, high priest from 219 to 199 B.C.E. Both lived at a time when the latter part of the Bible, at least, was still in a state of flux.

Shimon said: “The world rests on three things: Torah, worship, and *gemilut hasadim*.”² Perhaps he was trying to indicate the ethical and religious ideas which give ultimate value to human life and without which it is impossible to achieve true humanity. According to Israel Mattuck, Shimon’s statement may have a more philosophical and even mystical meaning; that is, human life as expressed in the world of communities simply cannot exist or endure without the practice of *gemilut hasadim*: acts of love and compassion among human beings.³ At any rate, the earliest literary trace of the idea is approximately the second century B.C.E.

The concept of *gemilut hasadim* is, then, deeply rooted in the Jewish

1. *Berakhot* 5a. See Hosea 6.6; Micah 6.8; Psalm 100.5.

2. *Pirke Avot* 1.2.

3. Israel Mattuck, *Jewish Ethics* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1953), p. 110.

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psyche. The early sages must have asked themselves: How is *hesed* to be expressed, how do we give life to this biblical value and fulfill Micah's *ahavat hesed*? Their answer, evidently, was through *gemilut hasadim*. The relation of *hesed* to *gemilut hasadim* is similar to the relationship between *zedakah* as a value and its expression in *zedakot*, actual deeds of charity. Judaism does not stop with an abstract notion. Plato, through Socrates, asks: What is the good? How do we express justice? How do we act mercifully? How does *zedakah* translate itself into action? Micah asks, what is good, and answers with three action-terms.

With the rabbinic, or extra-canonical, foundation in the statement of Shimon Hazaddik, rabbinic insights into the meaning of *gemilut hasadim* can be explored more fully.

II. Zedakah

The concept of *gemilut hasadim* is considered *shekulah*, equal to all other mizvot.⁴ The rabbis perceived it as all-encompassing, which bears out the notion of *shekulah*, in asserting that the entire Torah begins and ends with God's performance of *gemilut hasadim*. The opening portion of Genesis describes God making clothes for Adam and Eve; the closing verses of Deuteronomy depict him as burying Moses. If such deeds are appropriate for God, then how much the more so for human beings.⁵

The rabbis imply that the very heart of Torah — the spirit of God's law and will — is encompassed by the value of *gemilut hasadim*. It gives a moral and spiritual texture to all the laws of Torah. This, perhaps, is the meaning of *shekulah*: equal in *qualitative* weight to all other mizvot.

Consider another rabbinic reflection based on Genesis 47:29: "And when the days of Israel's death approached, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'If now I have found favor in your eyes put, I pray you, your hand under my thigh so that you will show me mercy [*hesed*] and truth [*v'emet*]; bury me not, I pray you, in Egypt.'" Rashi examines the phrase *hesed v'emet* (which can be translated as true, disinterested kindness) "since one cannot hope for a reward" for carrying out acts of *hesed*.

Rashi's comment about there being no reward for *gemilut hasadim* points to another rabbinical insight which identifies *gemilut hasadim* as a uniquely Jewish value:

Zedakah is performed with one's money; *zedakah* can be given only to the poor; *gemilut hasadim* to both poor and wealthy; *zedakah* can be provided only for the living; *gemilut hasadim* to both the living and the dead.⁶

The basic difference, then, between *zedakah* and *gemilut hasadim* is that the former refers to monetary service while the latter refers to personal service. *Gemilut hasadim* can be performed with love and caring, with

4. J.T. *Peah* 1, 1, 15c.

5. *Sota* 14a.

6. *Sukkah* 49b.

time, energy, and commitment. The example most often mentioned is that of caring for the dead, cited already by Rashi, as well as in the last passage from the Talmud. It is made even more explicit in this account:

The highest form of benevolent action is that undertaken towards the dead, because then there can never be any thought of reward from the recipient. A poor person may one day be in a position to repay his benefactor, but the dead person cannot repay and, moreover, the deceased needs the help of the living. . . .⁷

Moore amplifies this distinction by indicating that *zedakah* is actually commanded in biblical and rabbinic literature. The Shulhan Arukh, which contains a section on *zedakah*, does not have one on *gemilut hasadim*.⁸ The implication is that *zedakah* is necessary to safeguard the fundamental rights of the human being, such as the law prohibiting murder, because Judaism considers the right to live to be basic.

Gemilut hasadim, however, does not deal with human rights; it deals with human needs and the sensitive, compassionate response to them. That is why it cannot be legislated. This characteristic is expressed in a story by Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov:

I learned how we must truly love our neighbor from the conversation between two villagers which I overheard. The first said: "Tell me, friend Ivan, do you love me?" The second: "I love you deeply." The first: "Do you know, my friend, what gives me pain?" The second: "How can I know what gives you pain?" The first: "If you do not know what gives me pain, how can you say that you truly love me?" Understand, then, to love — truly to love — means to know what brings pain to your fellow human being.⁹

But *gemilut hasadim* is not to be completely distinguished from *zedakah*. In a sense, it is the highest form of *zedakah*, beyond the call of duty and the commanding voice of justice. While *zedakah* is primarily limited to the giving of material things, there is a limit to such giving; according to the Talmud we should not spend more than 20% of our possessions on good works.¹⁰

Gemilut hasadim may be thought of as the ultimate level of *zedakah* in terms of a continuum or gradation. In Maimonides' eight degrees of *zedakah*, the highest is really an expression of *gemilut hasadim*: helping a person to help himself; lending him money to open a business; joining him in a partnership; finding him a job so that he can support himself and not be in need of *zedakah*. *Gemilut hasadim*, therefore, is the highest form of *zedakah* in that it saves a person from having to resort to other forms of *zedakah*.

We have here a principle which, according to Judaism, transcends

7. *Tanhuma B, Vayehi*.

8. George Foote Moore, *Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), II, p. 174.

9. Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Later Masters* (New York: A Schocken Book, 1948), p. 86.

10. *Ketuvot* 50a.

Jewish law. Within the spirit of Judaism, this is an admission that we cannot live our lives by the strict letter of the law, by mere obedience to a set of rules.

III. *Middat Hasidut*

The practice of *gemilut hasadim* is based on the more comprehensive principle of *middat hasidut*, the quality of *hesed*, as opposed to the principle of *middat hadin*, the principle of living by laws and rules. *Din* or *din Torah* consists of canon law, statutes and codes. Nahmanides states that a person can live strictly by the laws and rules of Judaism and still be a “scoundrel.”¹¹

It is in the spirit of Judaism, and uniquely so, that the halakhah itself has developed a corrective to obedience and strict adherence to it. Halakhah tells us that we need to go beyond it, beyond formal duty to the rules and inclusive obedience to the codes, if we are to be completely human.

One of the most graphic examples of this self-corrective principle is the statement by Rav Yoḥanan: “Jerusalem was destroyed only because its inhabitants judged strictly according to the injunctions of the Torah and did not act *lifnim mishurat hadin* — beyond the letter of the law.” The passage goes on to ask anonymously: “Does this mean, then, that judgments should have been made according to untrained arbitrators?” Rav Yoḥanan replies: “No, it means that judgments were made strictly on the basis of biblical law and did not go beyond the requirements of the law [*lifnim mishurat hadin*].”¹²

Shurat hadin (the letter or line of the law) moves only within the limits of the law, but *lifnim mishurat hadin* aspires to a superior kind of human existence, not only supplementing the law but also serving as a reminder lest we become rigidly legalistic, thinking that we can achieve the highest levels of humanity through law itself. We must never become satisfied with legalistic piety.

Two words have been used with reference to law: *din* and halakhah. *Din* or *din Torah* refers to the strict laws, the codes and rules. But halakhah encompasses more than what the rules explicitly require or allow. Halakhah acknowledges that it cannot mandate all facets of the moral life. A compassionate, humane life is immeasurable, as we have seen through the expression of *gemilut hasadim*, which, like the moral life itself, does not have strict parameters.

Gemilut hasadim, in other words, encompasses supralegal conduct. With *shurat hadin*, the Jew confronts the specific commands addressed to him by God, either in *Torah shebikhtav* (written law) or *Torah she-b'al peh* (oral law). His response to *shurat hadin* is to carry out the prescribed act. With respect to *lifnim mishurat hadin*, however, he looks beyond the law

11. Commentary on Leviticus 19:2.

12. *Bava Mezia* 30b.

and tries to respond to situations within the spirit of the law rather than its letter. *Gemilut hasadim* operates in human life according to *lifnim mishurat hadin*, within the spirit and ethical nature of the law, but also beyond its strict, literal meaning.

The principle of *lifnim mishurat hadin* was, in fact, so important to its rabbinic authors that, once again, they sought biblical derivations in order to give it the enduring sanction of transcendent authority. Rabbi Yosef, for example, expounded on Exodus 18.20 in which Jethro advises Moses on leading his people and says: “. . . enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow.” Yosef says that the phrase, “make known to them,” signifies how to make a living; “the way” refers to *gemilut hasadim*; “they are to go” stands for visiting the sick and burying the dead; “the practices” means the exact letter of the law (*hadin*); “they are to follow” refers to *lifnim mishurat hadin*.¹³

The principle is also derived from Exodus 6.18: “And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of Yahveh.” Nahmanides says:

Our rabbis interpret this verse beautifully as referring to the principle of *lifnim mishurat hadin*. Their idea here is that the Torah first [v. 17] commands the observances of God’s commandments and testimonies and statutes, and then follows this command in the next verse by the command to do that which is right and good, implying that we are to do those good things which were not included in these commandments.¹⁴

Nahmanides emphasizes that this is an important point by explaining that it is impossible to refer in the Torah to all the relationships between a person and his neighbors and friends, to all his business affairs, to all the improvements that bear upon one’s community and country. But after the Torah mentions many such laws in another place (Lev. 19), it repeats, in a general way, that man must do what is good and right in everything, which includes arbitration (in the case of monetary litigation) and the principle of *lifnim mishurat hadin*. It also includes other rules and admonitions making for kindly, compassionate behavior towards one’s fellow.

Another source text is Proverbs 2.20, which is related to a story in the Talmud about some porters who had been working for Rabba bar Huna and who had broken a barrel of wine while handling it. Because they had evidently been somewhat negligent, the strict letter of the law (*shurat hadin*) would have held them liable for the damage. They had been remiss in performing their assigned tasks and were, therefore, not entitled to their pay. By way of guaranteeing restitution, Rabba held onto their clothes, which had apparently been left in his possession as surety. Then

they came and told Rav [head of the Sura Academy] [who in turn] told him [Rabba]: “Return their clothes to them.” Rabba asked: “Is this the *din*?”

13. *Bava Kama* 100a-b.

14. Commentary on Exodus 6.18.

"Yes," Rav answered [quoting Proverbs], "that you may walk in the way of good men." Rabba then returned their clothes, and they said to him: "We are poor, we have worked all day, and now we are hungry and left with nothing!" So Rav said to Rabba: "Go and pay their wages!" Rabba asked: "Is this also the *din*?" "Yes," Rav replied, and [again quoting Proverbs], "And keep to the paths of the righteous."¹⁵

Finally, Rav Huna interprets Psalm 145.17, "Yahveh is just [*zaddik*] and merciful [*hasid*] in all his doings," in this way: "At the beginning He is *zaddik* but at the end He deals with the world like a *hasid*, on the principle of *hesed* [that is, *lifnim mishurat hadin*], because the world could not exist without *hesed*."¹⁶

A similar idea is expressed in the prayer said, as it were, by God, but attributed to Rav:

May it be my will that my mercy overcome my anger; and may my compassion rule over my attribute [of justice], that I may deal with my children according to the attribute of mercy; and out of regard for them may I act *lifnim mishurat hadin*.¹⁷

Thus the rabbis attempted to give authority to this principle because they realized that, although a community cannot exist without law or *din Torah*, it cannot endure with *din Torah* alone. A community cannot endure without humanity, without responding to the others' needs in addition to protecting human rights.

This approach was explicitly stated in the Maggid Mishneh, a 14th century commentary on the Mishneh Torah: "It would have been inappropriate (for the Torah) to command details. . . . man's characteristics and his behavior vary, depending upon the time and the individual." It goes on to say that the rabbis established some principles that were absolute *din* and others which were by way of *hasidut*; that is, principles based on compassion, understanding, concern, caring — the immeasurable expressions of *gemilut hasadim*.¹⁸ The principle of *lifnim mishurat hadin* is, obviously, of great importance in Jewish tradition.

IV. The Source of Obligation

What, however, is the validating, driving source of this principle of going beyond the law? How can we justify it so that it is intellectually and ethically acceptable? The essential spring of authority in Judaism is *imitatio Dei*, based on such biblical passages as Exodus 19.6,8; Leviticus 19.1; and Deuteronomy 28.9. We act with compassion because of *zelem Elohim*, and it is our duty, therefore, to emulate His ways. We are His spiritual and moral reflection. Just as He acts *lifnim mishurat hadin*, so must we reflect His actions.

15. *Bava Mazia* 83a.

16. *Rosh Hashanah* 17b.

17. *Berakhot* 7a.

18. *Shekhenim* 14.5.

The rabbis were fond of amplifying the concept of *imitatio Dei* and *zelem Elohim* in graphic detail and in terms of the various expressions of *gemilut hasadim* as performed by God Himself. Reference has already been made to the fact that the Torah begins and ends with *gemilut hasadim* on the part of God: clothing the naked and burying the dead. Pithily they said: "What is the duty of a king's entourage? To emulate the king."¹⁹ More graphically, Rabbi Yehudah ben Ilai said that attending upon a bride is an expression of *imitatio Dei* since God Himself engaged in attending to the needs of Eve and actually served as "best man" for the first couple. What other explanation can there be for the passage, "And he brought her unto the man"?²⁰

In fulfilling the command, "You shall walk after Yahveh your God" (Deut. 13.5), the Talmud then asks, what is the way to walk? The answer: As God clothed Adam and Eve (Gen. 3.21), so must we provide clothing for those who are in need. As He visited Abraham following his circumcision (Gen. 18.1), so must we visit the sick and help them in their distress. As God consoled Isaac after his father's death (Gen. 25.11), so must we seek to comfort mourners; and as He engaged in the burial of Moses (Deut. 34.5-6), so is it our duty to help with the burial and care of the dead.²¹

Rabbi Akiva thought that the most comprehensive and binding source of all obligation was in the biblical statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19.18). But Ben Azzai took issue and said that it was the biblical verse: "This is the record of Adam's line — When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God . . ." (Gen. 5.1). Ben Azzai's selection premises that there is a God and that there is within man a divine image, which is a reflection of what God is and does. Thus we follow what God does.

There is a problem, however, with this source of ethical obligation, as revealed in the question that Abraham asks of God: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Gen. 18.25) The implication is that God Himself, the ultimate source of ethical obligation, is accountable to a standard of justice beyond His own ultimacy. Is there a moral standard independent of, and greater than, God? When God proclaims an apparently unjust decree, Abraham is constrained to question Him.

Plato deals with the problem in the *Euthyphro* when Socrates asks: Does God love virtue because it is virtuous, or is it virtuous because God loves it? Euthyphro incautiously admits that God loves virtue because it is virtuous, abandoning his own definition that virtue is whatever God loves. Socrates gets Euthyphro to admit that God loves virtue as an absolute, ultimate standard. The implication is that the absolute standard

19. *Sifra Kedoshim*, Leviticus 19.2.

20. *Bereshit Rabba* 12.5; Genesis 2.22.

21. *Sota* 14a.

would exist without God. Such is the Platonic argument against the divine command theory of ethics.

If, then, we cannot justify *gemilut hasadim* on the basis of a commanding God, and if we cannot believe that this is the source of our own sense of duty and moral obligation, is there another way to validate the authority and obligatory nature of *gemilut hasadim*?

A possible resolution is based on John Rawls' "veil of ignorance." We should try to imagine, he says, all possible positions and circumstances in society, every social and economic condition, structure and level. What kind of society would we prefer to be in if we did not know where we would fit in the scheme of things? The veil of ignorance has fallen. Not knowing in what position we would be — rich, poor, infant, handicapped, severely retarded, Jewish, black — we would probably choose a social structure that would be kind, sympathetic, caring, loving, beneficent, and compassionate instead of one that simply attempted to prevent harm; in other words, a society based on the quality and extent of its *gemilut hasadim*.²²

Since we are to form a social group under a veil of total ignorance, we will do everything within our power to protect all forms of human vulnerability because we do not know how vulnerable we ourselves will be in that new society. This protection includes not only the protection of life itself but its nurturance against any harm that makes survival questionable. Even the most powerful person is vulnerable at some time or other; everyone sleeps, everyone becomes ill.

Such protection of basic rights is the basis of nonmaleficence — not doing harm — which is also the foundation of *din Torah*. But there is, additionally, the principle of beneficence in a community: not merely preventing harm and removing evil, but actually doing good. Although beneficence may not be an absolute necessity, it adds to the quality of bonding in a community; it gives deeper dimension in terms of love, compassion, and trust.

Rousseau speaks of an imaginary multitude in search of an "association which will defend the person and goods of each member. . . . united thus in a single body. . . ." ²³ It was not as imaginary as he may have thought. He could have used an example taken from the Torah: the "mixed multitude" that came out of Egypt — thousands of former slaves without a society, state or community, without laws, without a strong "associative bond." These ex-slaves came together to form an association, and the first laws that they agreed upon were protective, in order to preserve their newly-won individual freedom. Without them, they would

22. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 141.

23. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 60, 63.

have perished in the desert. These laws changed the multitude into a community.

For men and women just out of bondage, observing a Sabbath was essential in order to treat each other with dignity: to rest and re-create themselves, to step aside from relentless labor and realize that they exist as more than an exploitable work force. The law requiring them to honor their parents helped, then as now, to establish communal continuity. If parents and children are valued for themselves, then it is possible for parents to love and trust their children, and for the children, in turn, to learn the importance of loving and being loved so that they will pass on this trust and benevolence to the next generation and thus assure the continuation of a people and its associative bond. No one is more vulnerable than the very young and the very old. With a bond of trust between generations, the contingencies of birth, infancy, and aging are protected. The fifth commandment reflects this protective caring. "Honor means to give them [parents] food and drink; put their clothing upon them and tie their shoes, take them out and bring them in."²⁴

What justifies the obligatory nature and validates the moral authority of *gemilut hasadim*, then, is not the commanding voice of God but the voice and power of community for the perpetuation of a trustful bond of human association. The oldest school of all is the most compelling authority: human experience and the distress of isolation, vulnerability, and insecurity.

"The Holy One, blessed be He, made a condition with creation, and said to it: 'If Israel will accept the Torah, you will endure, but if they do not, I will return you to utter emptiness and void.'"²⁵ There is no endurance without the acceptance of fundamental laws which assure an enduring association based on caring.

Both *shurat hadin* and *lifnim mishurat hadin* are essential for the survival of community. Survival itself is the ground of moral validation for *gemilut hasadim*. The community cannot endure without a union of *middat hadin* and *middat hasidut*.

V. Caring As Innate

We survive only because we care and are cared for. Delicately constructed human creatures as we are, we could not have survived without having at our core a caring, loving, trusting nature. We evolved to the point of culture because of the innately caring aspect of our species' nature. It is the basis on which every generation builds to newer heights.

We are also innately vulnerable — every person, from the strongest to the weakest, from the richest to the poorest. Our initial years would be impossible were it not for caring from others. No other animal exists for

24. *Kiddushin* 31b.

25. *Avoda Zara* 3a.

so long a time in so helpless a condition. The extent to which we are nurtured and cared for will inevitably determine the degree to which we will be capable of nurturing and caring for others.

Seder Eliyahu Rabba states that the word *adam* in Lev. 1.2 “suggests feelings of kinship, compassion, and love.”²⁶ In other words, “man” is associated by the very nature of being human with brotherhood and friendship — sentiments, values, and associations that call into play the practice of *hesed*. “Man” is linked to deeds prompted by kindness of heart and not necessarily written in any code of *din Torah*.

Again, according to Seder Eliyahu Rabba, God tested the “first generations” of mankind.

... They were given the most days and lived the longest lives . . . in order to test their conduct — in order to see whether they would engage in *gemilut ḥasadim* for their immediate forebears.

Unfortunately, only Noah met the test. Generations later, however, *gemilut ḥasadim* was one of the virtues that characterized the generation that went out of Egypt.²⁷ The implication is that Noah’s generation could not endure because it lacked the qualities of *ḥasidut*, but the generation of Egyptian slaves could endure and transform itself into a community because of *ḥasidut*. An unbreakable link between community and caring was forged at Sinai. A community was born with *shurat hadin* — with the development of strict laws, rules, and statutes which had to be obeyed as a discipline — and, in turn, it gave birth to *lifnim mishurat hadin*, a moral power extending beyond the strict letter of the law and expressing itself in *gemilut ḥasadim*.

The principle of *gemilut ḥasadim* is our caring connection not only with community but with all of life — every person, tree, animal, and star. It is the energy-force driving us to care and to connect. This is what the rabbis discovered in their vision of *gemilut ḥasadim*. It was a great discovery, possibly as great as the discovery of the one ultimate reality.

Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov sums it up:

If someone comes to you and asks your help, you shall not turn him off with pious words, saying: “Have faith and take your troubles to God.” You shall act as if there were no God, as if there were only one person in all the world who could help him — only yourself.²⁸

26. *Seder Eliyahu Rabba* 34. M. Friedman, ed. Vienna, 1902. See *Tanna debe Eliyyahu*, translated by William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1981), p. 119.

27. *Seder Eliyahu Rabba* 80, 86, 123. See Braude, pp. 217-18, 231, 306.

28. Buber, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

The Life and Death of Abram the Doubter

HAIM CHERTOK

FROM HIS INITIAL APPEARANCE IN Genesis 12, going forth from his native land and his father's house "as the Lord had commanded him," Abraham has been perceived by virtually all commentators as the man of faith par excellence. At God's word he acts unhesitatingly and decisively, culminating, of course, with the command to offer his beloved Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22). The traditional portrait of Abraham as the exemplary faithful servant of God's will is all the more remarkable for its uniqueness: none of the other patriarchs — neither Jacob, nor Joseph, nor Moses, nor David — emerges nearly as unsullied. Abraham alone, starting with his exodus from Haran at the age of seventy-five, is depicted as a man whose spiritual growth has occurred *before* the biblical narrator takes an interest in him. And, yet, the harrowing binding of Isaac by his father — the very pattern of Jewish piety — stands as an exercise in divine sadism unless we reexamine the text with an eye toward its pivotal role in Abraham's spiritual development. And that, I suggest, presents us with a revised figure.

The major enticement that God offers to Abraham (still Abram) for uprooting himself is, "I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you . . ." The remainder of the promise dealing with becoming a blessing for all the "families of the earth" must have been something of a mysterious hyperbole for the aging man. Childless with Sarah (then Sarai), the blessing of his own heir is surely preeminent in his thoughts and decisive in causing him to move. (Indeed, few other biblical figures move around quite as much.)

When he arrives in Shechem with Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth, he notices that "the Canaanites were then in the land" (Gen. 12:6). Now, of course, the Canaanites were in the land, just as there were Arabs in the land of Palestine in the late 19th century when Jews of the First Aliyah arrived. What is significant is how (or whether) they are perceived in relation to the purpose of the new arrivals. They not only give Abram occasion to pause and consider; the only reason for mentioning them at all is precisely that. For immediately (Gen. 12:7), "The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'I will give this land to your offspring.'" That single sentence not only reaffirms the operational promise but expands it to include for the first time "this *land*."

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Abram's response is to build an altar on the spot, to move on to Bethel where he builds another altar, and then to move on toward the Negev (Gen. 12:8-9). He is, in short, traversing the land that he is promised, presumably building more altars, and waiting. Two crucial events do *not* occur in the next five years: the Lord makes no further recorded appearance and Sarai does not become pregnant. Time is obviously working against the fulfillment of the promise. Even were we to contrive a figure who in no way doubts that the promise will *somehow* be redeemed, it is, I think, inconceivable that in the course of those years Abram never doubted its being fulfilled in the normal course of events or by conventional means. At the very least he must have occasionally doubted his own proper understanding of the divine words. To think less of Abram is to convert him into a plaster saint at odds with the Jewish spirit.

The next segment — his sojourn in Egypt — is the thorniest for traditional commentators to assimilate into the picture of the Man of Faith. It provides the symbolic keys to the entire sequence:

There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I am well aware that you are a beautiful woman. If the Egyptians see you, and think 'She is his wife,' they will kill me and let you live. Say then that you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may remain alive thanks to you" (Gen. 12: 10-13).¹

Sarai accedes to this astonishing duplicity and is taken into Pharaoh's palace. Abram acquires wealth thereby and is unharmed. But then "the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his household with mighty plagues on account of Sarai" (Gen. 12:17), and Pharaoh, uncovering Abram's ruse, angrily sends him forth with all his goods.

The most obvious manner of dealing with this odd material is to shift the focus from Abram himself and to see it as an anticipation of the later sojourn of the children of Jacob in Egypt. The parallel, displaced narrative elements include the famine in Canaan, the availability of foodstuffs in Egypt, the elevation of an Israelite into Pharaoh's palace, deception as a spring-motif of the plot, the plagues, and the waxing rich of the Hebrews. Further, since the plagues are here occasioned "on account of Sarai," Sarai in the house of Pharaoh plainly stands symbolically for the later Jews in bondage in Egypt. But that leads us back around to the conundrum of Abram's action, for if, from one angle, Sarai is a salvific prefiguration of both Joseph and Moses within the palace, from a different angle she is no less than Joseph being sold into bondage by his brothers, for the judgment on Abram's behavior is unambiguous and overwhelming. It occasions plague.

Let us return to the famine. Now famine is the proximate cause for

1. All citations are from the Jewish Publication Society's N.J.V. Translation.

the departure to Egypt, but, for the biblical imagination, neither famines nor plagues nor storms at sea en route to Tarshish are adventitious. They are judgments. So the question as to why Abram departs from the land he is promised has been begged. The famine is, in reality, an objective correlative for the barrenness of Abram and Sarai that is projected onto the very land which has been, as if in mockery, promised to their offspring. But years have passed, altars have been raised, and Abram has begun secretly to doubt whether the remote promise would ever be redeemed. That is why God visits the land with famine, for only an Abram whose fullness of faith has wavered can explain an Abram who acts so peculiarly.

Abram's separation from his father and from Haran is divinely sanctioned; Abram's separation from Canaan is not merely a blunder but the very result of inner infidelity. Abram's separation from Sarai in Egypt is not merely self-serving (in that it safeguards his life and promotes his wealth), but, insofar as it jeopardizes his *marital* fidelity, is a symbolic reenactment of his infidelity to God's promise. Moreover, it should be plainly seen that the Abram-Sarai-Pharaoh triplet is a mirror image of the Sarai-Abram-Hagar (the Egyptian serving woman) triplet which is ultimately to occur to Sarai (Gen. 16) as a solution to the barrenness of their marriage and the seeming emptiness of the promise. This latter is a conscious palliative to relieve an unbearable situation, whereas Abram's maneuverings in Egypt seem more an unconscious reflex springing from doubt and anxiety that God's promise would be fulfilled in conventional fashion. I suggest that the eccentricity of Abram's manipulations are a fair measure of the depth of his secret despair. God's judgment — plagues, albeit displaced upon Pharaoh — is unambiguous. Abram is rejoined to Sarai and to the land of Canaan.

Once returned to Canaan, Abram goes to Bethel to the site of the altar that he had built earlier and there he invokes God's name. Here, as elsewhere, what is significant is what does *not* occur. God does *not* address Abram, and He *will* not do so until the antitype to the improper separation from Sarai occurs: a severance from Lot. We know that this is needful for two reasons. First, in offering Lot whichever pasturage he prefers, we encounter the first instance of the proper magnanimity for which Abram finally becomes a byword. (Its ironic prefiguration has just occurred in Egypt.) Second, immediately after the separation, God speaks to Abram (Gen. 13:14-18), promising him and his offspring the length and breadth of the land of Canaan including (implicitly) the very land that he had just ceded to Lot!

All of Genesis 14 recounts the rescue of Lot by his kinsman Abram at the head of a troop of over 300 men and their triumphant return from the far north of the country. The narrative reveals several vital points. Most obviously, the surprising military prowess in a man of advanced years is not only a sign of God's favor but a prelude to continued sexual vitality. Further, the exploit gives Abram the opportunity to act on God's

words in Gen. 13:17, to move throughout the land that he is being promised for his offspring. But most decisive is the extension of the motif of magnanimity just presaged in his relations with Lot. He not only rescues his nephew, but when the mysterious Melchizedek, king of Salem, greets him with a blessing (and bread and wine), Abram "gave him a tenth of everything" (Gen. 14:20). This he trumps in his response to the offer of the king of Sodom that Abram retain the spoils: "I will not take so much as a thread or a sandal strap of what is yours" (Gen. 14:23), and he gives his own share to his men to divide among themselves. For himself, nothing!

Although one way of understanding Abram's behavior is that he is himself so wealthy that he needs nothing more for himself, nevertheless his generosity is exemplary and in sharp contrast to the textual omission of any such feelings in the man who had left Haran with "all the wealth that they had amassed" and went from Egypt "very rich in cattle, silver, and gold" (Gen. 12:5; 13:2). Let us not forget for an instant that Abram is ever-eager to get and beget an heir; a necessary precondition, it would seem, is his ascertaining the principle of magnanimous giving and forgiving. Whether he would have come to that had he and Sarai been blessed with a child much sooner seems to me problematic.

"Some time later, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.'" (Gen. 15:1). But Abram has heard this before, and, for the first time, voices the doubts which have haunted his last years: "O Lord God, what can You give me, seeing that I shall die childless . . ." (Gen. 15:2), that his heir will prove to be his servant Eliezer. Who could fault Abram for his *cri de coeur*? Still, its meaning and magnitude require underscoring. Generational layers of reverence and piety have obscured what seems the undeniable fact that Abram had lost faith in the "simple text" of the promise. Perhaps God meant something veiled or arcane; perhaps the promise required reinterpretation? Whatever the event, Abram's long-suppressed doubts are vented.

God reassures him that "none but your very own issue shall be your heir" (Gen. 15:4) and that his offspring shall be as numerous as the stars. At this point, the text reads most curiously. We hear that "because he put his trust in the Lord, He reckoned it to his merit" (Gen. 15:6), but immediately thereafter, when God reiterates that the land of Canaan will be his inheritance, Abram's scepticism again surfaces: "O Lord God, how shall I know that I am to possess it?" (Gen. 15:8). How are we to understand this vacillation of Abram's faith? It is not, I believe, so contradictory a matter. Abram *does* put his trust in the Lord *whatever* it may be that the Lord means by these words. What Abram clearly doubts is the *plain* meaning of the promise. Herein, I believe, is a key to Abram's prompt response, years later, to the divine behest in Genesis 22 to "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love . . . and offer him there as a burnt offering . . ."

Abraham has had much experience with the Lord. He puts his trust and life in His hands without reservation, but he also draws on years and years of the experience of habitual *doubt* that God's meaning is what it seems. Under the circumstance, it is a saving grace.

Returning to the vision, God favors Abram with a concrete sign, one which foreshadows the specific sign of the circumcision which He will later demand from Abram. A heifer, goat, and dove are brought before Him and cut in two; a young bird is not cut. Abram drives off birds of prey and succumbs to "a deep sleep" and "a great dark dread" (Gen. 15:11), after which he is granted a vision of the future enslavement and redemption of his offspring and a renewal of the covenant granting the land of Canaan to them. Two points, I believe, require emphasis: Naturally, the sacrifice of the animals refers not only to the rite of circumcision, not only to the binding of Isaac, but to the Temple rites in Jerusalem as well. (There are, additionally, many, many rabbinic historical analogues which lie outside the scope of this discussion.) What is, perhaps, not so obvious is that the theme of a proper *division* and *separation* into parts, first signalled by the division of the land with Lot, here receives divine warrant. And it was at just *this* point that Abram had recovered from his false moves with Sarai into Egypt.

The second matter is that the "great dark dread" which afflicts Abram refers not only to his vision of the Children of Israel enslaved in Egypt. Occurring as it does immediately after he drives away the birds of prey — an image which attaches itself to his victory over the kings of the North who had captured Lot — it additionally seems to me an objectification of his very state of mind at the beginning of his present encounter with God. In short, he is burdened with the dread and anxiety of being without an heir and with persistent doubt whether the promise will be redeemed after all.

There remain but two more turns of the screw to take note of. All of Genesis 16 recounts the events leading to Hagar bearing Ishmael to Abram. It is at Sarai's initiative. Nine years have passed since they left Haran. Nothing in Sarai's scheme directly contravenes the promise that Abram's "very own issue" shall be his heir. Abram, still puzzling over the riddle of the unfulfilled promise, immediately "heeded Sarai's request" (Gen. 16:2). Hagar conceives, but the friction that develops between the women signals to the reader (if not yet to Abram) that Sarai's scheme is a misconception, a situation which Abram should have anticipated had he sufficiently understood his Egyptian experience, but which cannot be aborted. The angel of the Lord promises Hagar not only Ishmael but "offspring and they shall be too many to count" (Gen. 16:10). And so the traditional progenitor of the Arabic peoples, long-term rivals for the land of the Jews, is conceived and born out of Abram's anxiety and misunderstanding.

Fully thirteen years later, when he is ninety-nine years of age, the

Lord appears to Abram. After identifying Himself as El Shaddai, He launches into His lengthiest revelation, informing the startled old man that his name shall be changed to Abraham “for I make you the father of a multitude of nations” and that he and all his kin shall be circumcised “as the sign of the covenant between Me and you” (Gen. 17:1-14). Abraham cannily says not a word until God informs him that his wife’s new name shall be Sarah and “I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her” (Gen. 17:15). Abraham had long before made his peace with the promise. This unsettles all.

Jolted into response, Abram falls on his face and laughs, saying to *himself*, “Can a child be born to a man a hundred years old, or can Sarah bear a child at ninety?” (Gen. 17:17). Now, unlike Sarah’s laughter in a later, parallel scene which is traditionally interpreted as derisive and blameworthy, the rabbinic view is that Abram’s laughter issues from joy at hearing the news. But almost surely this is not the case. Far more in keeping with his character and experience, I suggest, is an unsuppressible laugh of incredulity and doubt. For Abraham carries on in the same vein, this time not to himself but aloud to God: “Oh that Ishmael might live by Your favor!” (Gen. 17:18). Indeed, who could fault the near centenarian for trying to preserve his bird in the hand?

God reacts precisely to the note of disbelief in Abraham’s response: “Nevertheless, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac; and I will maintain My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring to come” (Gen. 17:19). God finds it necessary to repeat what He had said earlier to the dumbfounded man. Moreover, by pointedly identifying Sarah as “your wife,” He effectively chastises his faulty understanding. *Of course* the promised heir to the promised land would not spring from a concubine. Where was Abraham’s faith? The price of Abraham’s doubt, earlier adumbrated by the angel to Hagar, is now clarified. “As for Ishmael, I have heeded you” (Gen. 17:20), God ironically goes on, but that it historically has often been much at the pain of the Children of Israel requires little elaboration.

God concludes with the specific datum that Abraham has been awaiting for twenty-four years: “But My covenant I will maintain with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year” (Gen. 17:21). The unambiguous specificity of this promise drives Abraham into a swirl of activity. By the end of that very day he, Ishmael, and his entire household are circumcised as God had commanded, an affirmation of his renewal of full belief in his covenant with God. Only now is God ready to send, and Abraham is ready to receive, his promised heir.

There are a vast number of interpretations of the meaning of the rite of circumcision, but the foregoing narrative pattern warrants at the least the following: Abram, the man of habitual doubt, deserves the symbolic death that he undergoes. The self-inflicted pain is both a part of his punishment and a parallel to the childbirth pangs of the new man, Abraham

(as well as prologue to future birthpangs of Sarah which they presage). Moreover, his organ of procreation itself must be hallowed before the promise may be fulfilled. Finally, circumcision culminates the pattern of divinely-sanctioned separations issuing from faith which include removal from Haran, Terah, and Lot and is the antithesis of the divinely disavowed series of separations (from Canaan, from Sarai, and from the fullness of faith) all of which are recapitulated in the narrative segment of Hagar's intercepted flight.

Finally, Abram, when he comprehends that his personal great, dark dread of dying heirless stands baseless, acts with alacrity. Just as God will later accept the ram substitute for the child Isaac, now He will accept the foreskin — an extension of the theme of proper separation — in place of the doubter himself (or the ritual castration practiced in surrounding cultures). For the young bird in Abram's vision — an accretive symbol soon to focus as a figure of Isaac — was *not* cut, however threatened, and Abraham's is a God both of sublime mercy and merciful sublimation.

The spiritual education of Abraham is not at an end, but it has been vastly furthered. He is finally, at the age of one hundred, of fit state to engender his heir by Sarah, his true wife and a divinely appointed symbol for the very land which his descendants will inherit.

A Talmudic Discussion on Yissurin Shel Ahavah

JOEL B. WOLOWELSKY

ONE CANNOT TAKE BASIC ISSUE WITH Matthew B. Schwartz' general thesis that "The rabbis concentrated not so much on the theological aspects of theodicy as on the more pragmatic question of how shall an individual respond to the *yissurin* [suffering or affliction] which came upon him."¹ Speculation as to the "true meaning" of such suffering is at best frustrating; at its worst, it can paralyze man and prevent him from reaching his greatness, from changing himself — in Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's phrase² — from an object to a subject. Schwartz commented that all of the five types of *yissurin* which he outlined have in common the notion that suffering can be beneficial and not merely punitive. But I think that one, *yissurin shel ahavah* ["sufferings of love"], deserves special note.

We are introduced to this theory of *yissurin* in B. *Berakhot* 5a-b. If a man is suffering, we are told there, he should scrutinize his actions to see if he is being punished for any sin. If he is sinless, perhaps he is being punished for neglecting the study of Torah. But if that too does not ring true, then it must be *yissurin shel ahavah*. Rashi explains that God causes the guiltless to suffer in this world so that they might reap even greater rewards in the next. Somehow, God must "justify" the rewards to be received. As Rava said in the name of Sehora quoting R. Huna: God crushes with sufferings all those in whom He takes delight. And if the sufferer accepts these sufferings with love, his rewards will include seeing his children live a long life and having his Torah studies endure.

The Talmud is, of course, committed to the logical analysis of ideas; an argument is presented, analyzed, debated and eventually accepted or rejected. But not every position lends itself to detached analysis, especially one which attempts to offer an explanation of God's workings in this world. Like Job and his friends, the rabbis did not have access to the first chapter in which the rationale for what happens to people is laid out. When faced with a self-assured explanation which cannot be proved

1. Matthew B. Schwartz, "The Meaning of Suffering: A Talmudic Response to Theodicy," *JUDAISM*, 32:4 (Fall 1983), 444-451.

2. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "*Kol Dodi Dofek*," in P. Peli, ed., *Besod Hayahid Vehayahad* (Jerusalem: Orot, 1976), p. 343.

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either way, the Talmud's editors sometimes felt it wise simply to let the reader decide if, indeed, the author should really have been satisfied with his pat explanation. Indeed, one senses that the ensuing discussion in *Berakhot* is designed to make us appreciate the difficulties involved with this concept. Here, though, one must be sensitive to the tone of the conversation rather than to its abstract logical content.

Maimonides argued that the concept of *yissurin shel ahavah* is not to be found in the Torah.³ It seems that it is first associated with R. Yohanan, the second generation Palestinian *amora* who eventually became the head of the yeshivah in Tiberias. He himself was one of those pious Jews who led a hard life. Orphaned at birth, he saw his family fortune go from riches to rags, and eventually he buried each of his ten sons. R. Yaakov bar Iddi and R. Aha bar Hanina argued in our text whether *yissurin shel ahavah* could encompass those sufferings which cause one to neglect prayer or the study of Torah. But R. Hiyya bar Abba said, in the name of R. Yohanan, that even in such cases one can explain away the undeserved pain by appealing to *yissurin shel ahavah*.

It is hard to argue with such a neat explanation. But the Gemara, with what seems to be good humor and a touch of irony, proceeds to show that R. Yohanan's all-encompassing explanation sounds better in the abstract than in the specific cases to which it might be applied.

A Tanna appears to recite a *beraita* before R. Yohanan: "Whoever occupies himself with the Torah or with kindnesses towards others, or goes through the trauma of burying his children is forgiven all his sins." R. Yohanan quickly accepts the first two, but the third just does not sit well with him. Somehow, it does not make sense to explain away the death of one's child that way, although a "certain old man" is able to produce an appropriate *g'zeirah shavah* in the name of R. Simeon bar Yohai. In fact, R. Yohanan was wont to say that having open and embarrassing bodily plagues or being childless could not possibly be *yissurin shel ahavah*.

The Gemara is a bit uneasy with R. Yohanan's last statement. Could "childless" mean having had children and losing them, it asks. But R. Yohanan used to say "This is the bone of my tenth son!" (It seems that R. Yohanan used to carry around some sort of bone of his tenth deceased son and bring it to *shiva* calls. "Look," he would tell the mourner, "I've had such troubles and accept them with love; certainly you can be reconciled to your troubles.") Hence R. Yohanan's *bon mot* regarding plagues and childlessness must refer to a person who never had children, concludes the Gemara, not one who lost his children. The latter suffering might well be *yissurin shel ahavah*.

It is not surprising that R. Yohanan was hesitant to accept the full *beraita* recited before him. On another occasion (B. *Baba Batra* 116a) he quoted R. Simeon bar Yohai's maxim that "childlessness must be the

3. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, III:17.

result of sin.” But, says the Gemara there, R. Yoḥanan used to go around showing the bone of his tenth (and last) son; certainly he did not consider himself a sinner! Ah, the Gemara concludes, he was only quoting R. Sim-eon bar Yoḥai, not agreeing with him.

It is not clear whether R. Yoḥanan’s condolences were effective. He knew that when paying a *shiva* call one could not intrude with explanations or continue talking if the mourner had heard enough, and he was sensitive to the fact that the best-intentioned remark could be misunderstood (*Moed Kattan* 27b). But he could not put his sons’ deaths (or their artifacts) behind him and kept explaining his and others’ sufferings as *yissurin shel ahavah*. Perhaps he was right; we shall not know until we get to the next world. One senses, though, that it was easier for R. Yoḥanan to offer this explanation of a child’s death to others than to accept it when it was presented to him.

The Gemara goes on to relate three anecdotes of *bikkur ḥolim*, the *mizvah* of visiting the sick. First, R. Ḥiyyah bar Abba fell sick. He had just some lines before quoted R. Yoḥanan’s reassurances that all sorts of sufferings could be *yissurin shel ahavah*, and R. Yoḥanan now came to him to raise his spirits. He asked: “Are your sufferings dear to you?” After all, R. Ḥiyyah bar Abba was certainly a pious man and so his sickness must be *yissurin shel ahavah* with quite a few rewards yet to be reaped. “Keep them,” R. Ḥiyyah tells R. Yoḥanan; “I want neither the sufferings nor their rewards.” So R. Yoḥanan cured him.

Soon after, R. Yoḥanan himself was taken ill and his student, R. Ḥanina, came to visit. What better cheer could he bring than his mentor’s greeting, “Are your sufferings dear to you?” “No,” answers R. Yoḥanan, “I want neither them nor their rewards.” So R. Ḥanina cured him. Now, queries the Gemara, is it not strange that R. Yoḥanan didn’t just cure himself; after all, he was able to cure R. Ḥiyyah bar Abba. The answer is: A prisoner cannot release himself from his dungeon. And it is a poignant reply, for, as we immediately see, R. Yoḥanan cannot free himself from his approach to suffering, despite his uneasiness in having others apply it to him.

In the third scene, R. Eleazar is sick and R. Yoḥanan, now healthy, comes to visit him. The room is dark, but R. Yoḥanan’s beauty fills it with light. R. Eleazar starts to weep. With what must be a warm smile, the Gemara relates their conversation: Why are you crying, asks R. Yoḥanan. Is it because you did not learn enough Torah? Well, it’s the effort that counts! Is it because of your poverty? Don’t you realize that it’s the next world that’s important! Is it because of children? How could *you* cry about that; here is the bone of my tenth son! In response to such sympathy R. Eleazar retorts, I’m crying because such a beautiful person like you will eventually become dust! Now that, says R. Yoḥanan, is something to cry about. So they both wept. Then R. Yoḥanan, slipping right into his old patterns, asks: Are your sufferings dear to you? By this time we (if not R.

Yohanan) know the answer: “I want neither them nor their rewards.” So R. Yohanan cured him.

At this point the Gemara has one last comment on the potential danger of using *yissurin shel ahavah* as an explanation of suffering. R. Huna had suffered a severe financial loss when four hundred of flasks of his wine turned to vinegar. His colleagues rebuke him: Figure out why God is doing this to you, they say. R. Huna responds: Do you suspect me of sin? Haven’t you heard that suffering does not necessarily reflect sin? But the rabbis are not convinced. Can we suspect God of punishing a man without cause, they demand. And, indeed, they were able to show R. Huna his specific sin, eliciting proper repentance on his part. Having undermined reliance on R. Yohanan’s theory showing how it can prevent a person from correcting himself, the Gemara provides an all’s-well-that-ends-well conclusion appropriate for stories brought to prove a point. “Some say the vinegar turned back to wine, while others say that the price of vinegar went up so that his stock was worth as much as wine.”

The uneasiness with R. Yohanan’s pat explanation of the afflictions of innocent people should not be confused with the simple acceptance of its alternative. When R. Yohanan’s student R. Ami, proclaimed (B. *Shabbat* 55a-b) that there is neither death nor suffering without sin, no less than the heavenly angels responded with amazement. R. Ami’s explanation is rejected — *tiyuvta d’Rav Ami tiyuvta* — because, after all, the rabbis knew that people had died and suffered without sinning. But if R. Ami is wrong, R. Yohanan may be right. Perhaps. It’s just that, in explaining why bad things happen to good people, one should have the good sense to realize that explanations that sound good to one person may not be so proper when offered to others. The silence demanded of a person paying a *shiva* call is usually more appropriate; if one who is explaining away another’s troubles cannot heed that advice, he should consider and present his insights as more tentative than assured.

Portrait of God as a Young Artist: The Flood Revisited

BYRON L. SHERWIN

What I have built I am breaking down, and
what I have planted I am plucking up.

Jeremiah 45:4

UNLIKE THE WORLD THAT THE FLOOD destroyed, the biblical account of the Flood was not created *ex nihilo*. In the biblical era it was believed that a great flood had occurred in the distant past. It was further known that the cultures that had preceded and/or were contemporaneous with biblical Israel had composed certain myths, like the Epic of Gilgamesh, to explain why and how the Flood had happened.¹ Like other ancient accounts of the Flood, the biblical story offers an explanation and a description of the events which is consistent with its own theology and with its own world-view. Like other preserved versions of the flood episode, the biblical version endeavors retroactively to explain what was already believed to have taken place. Like other reports, the biblical narrative may be read as a short historical novel which embellishes a well-known historical event with an imposed, if not a contrived, plot. It is precisely the plot which differentiates the biblical account from other ancient ones, e.g., the Gilgamesh Epic.

The plot of the biblical story of the Flood seems simple enough. Human sin has escalated to the point of no return. Corruption is rampant, and the severity of the situation demands extreme measures. Radical sin requires punishment and excludes the possibility of repentance and of consequent forgiveness. There is but one viable option — destruction. God destroys the world with water, but one family is saved, the family of Noah, the righteous person of his generation. It is Noah's virtue that saves them from extinction. When the Flood subsides, God begins again; the world is re-created. Noah is the new Adam, the new ancestor of humankind.

1. See the summaries of the ancient Near Eastern accounts of the Flood in Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 97-98; and Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), pp. 37-63.

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Modern biblical scholars and educators, in their reflections upon the Flood story, often draw parallels and demarcate contrasts between the stories of Noah and of Utnapishtim, the “Babylonian Noah,” whose tale is found in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Those who embrace this approach are quick to indicate that in the Epic the flood is the product of divine caprice rather than of divine justice. God brings the Flood to render justice while the Babylonian gods bring the flood for no apparent reason, except, perhaps, to eliminate the noisy racket which people make while the gods are trying to sleep. Similarly, God saves Noah because of his righteousness; i.e., because God is just, because Noah deserves salvation. On the other hand, the Babylonian gods plan to save no one — righteous or wicked. Utnapishtim is saved secretly by one of the gods — Ea, the god of wisdom — but for no apparent reason, certainly not because of his virtue. On the basis of such comparisons and contrasts, the conclusion is reached that the “pagan” gods of Babylonia act out of caprice and without reason, while the God of Scripture acts out of justice and with reason.¹ Thus, while the story-line of the biblical account has many similarities with the story-line of the Babylonian version, the respective plots of the two renditions are markedly different, expressing radically different theologies, severely diverse world-views.

Seemingly unaware of other ancient versions of the Flood story, the rabbis, in their commentaries on the biblical Flood story, certify the biblical version’s account of the plot and strengthen it. They amplify the corruption of Noah’s contemporaries which justified God’s bringing the Flood and they elaborate upon Noah’s righteousness that justified his being spared from the destruction wrought by the Flood.³

It would seem that the biblical text, the rabbinic exegesis of it, and cross-cultural studies of the text all yield the identical plot: God is just, the people were irredeemable sinners; Noah was righteous. Therefore, God saved Noah and destroyed everyone (and everything) else as punishment for radical, unrepentant sin. The text seems unproblematic. The plot seems simple enough. The ancient and modern commentaries seem to be fortifying and amplifying the plot as it is stated. But, is it so simple? Is the usual reading of the story acceptable? Is another reading possible, or even desirable?

Post-Flood Theology

The central theological problem that this plot evades is the problem of theodicy. Literally, “theodicy” means “the justification of God.” As applied to the Flood story, the question is whether or not God was truly

2. See Ezekiel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 21-102.

3. See Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 1:146-157, and sources noted in 5:167-174.

justified in annihilating the world and humankind. Neither the biblical narrative itself nor the rabbinic commentaries upon it raise this question. They assume that the punishment fits the crime, that God acted justly. For example, the *Sifre* on Deuteronomy (*Piska* #307) observes that God's works are perfect. He did not create people wicked or righteous; they became so. Therefore, even if He annihilates the wicked, as in the case of the Flood, one must not question His actions.

No one questions God's justice in bringing the Flood, certainly not Noah — the silent witness-survivor. But despite Noah's silence, and despite the *Sifre's* exhortation to us not to question God's actions, questions are, nonetheless, in order.

The doctrine of divine retribution is a central assumption of biblical and of subsequent Jewish theology.⁴ Sin requires punishment; virtue promises reward. The Flood story articulates this theological position: Noah is saved because of his virtue; others are destroyed because of their corruption. Yet, is there a sin, or a cumulative group of sins, that could justify virtually the total annihilation of the human species? And, if such sins exist, what kind of God could be merciless enough, cruel enough to destroy the human race for committing them? The biblical text implies that the sins were, indeed, heinous enough to require such punishment. The rabbinic commentaries rest content that the sins which they identify with the Flood generation — lawlessness, murder, idolatry, sexual perversion, and witchcraft — would surely justify God's actions.⁵ Nevertheless, one may question whether God's action can be justified, and whether trust and faith and love in a God who would exact such a terrible punishment can still be maintained. The question of whether an alternative plot, of whether another explanation of the Flood story, might be extracted from the text needs to be examined.

A world-wide Holocaust of water rather than of fire, the Flood, like the European Holocaust, cannot theologically rest well with the argument of divine retribution. Theologians of the Holocaust, the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem," almost unanimously reject divine retribution as a viable theological explanation for it. Consequently, they seek alternative explanations and articulate alternative responses.⁶ Similarly, theologians of the Flood, that first "Final Solution of the Human Problem,"

4. See Solomon Schechter, "The Doctrine of Divine Retribution in Rabbinic Literature," in *Studies in Judaism* (New York: Meridian, 1958), pp. 105-123; A. Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinic Literature* (New York: KTAV, 2nd ed., 1968); Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 135-156; and Byron L. Sherwin, "Theodicy: Reason and Mystery," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal*, 18,3 (1971): 62-76.

5. Ginzberg, 5:173, no. 17.

6. See Byron L. Sherwin, "Jewish and Christian Theology Encounters the Holocaust," in Sherwin and Ament, eds., *Encountering the Holocaust* (Chicago: Impact Press Inc., 1979), pp. 407-442.

should seek alternative explanations to divine retribution. As descendants of the survivors of the Flood, “postflood theology” must concern us.

The text’s account of God’s decision to destroy His creation may be read in at least two ways. One would identify human corruption as the cause of God’s decision to destroy the world by water. This, as was noted above, is the usual reading of the text. However, another reading would place the primary reason for God’s decision not in God’s disappointment with human beings, but, rather, in His disappointment with Himself.

God’s decision may have been directly evoked more by His regret and sorrow (Gen. 6:6) with His own actions than with the deeds of those whom He had created. The verse in which He announces His intentions reads (Gen. 6:7):

I will blot out from the earth the men whom I have created — men together with creeping things and birds of the sky; for I regret that I made them.

God’s decision to destroy not only human beings, but animals, insects, reptiles and birds, seems in this verse to be more engendered by His own dissatisfaction with His abilities as a Creator than with the sins of one of the species that He had created. In this text, God may be exhibiting Freudian projection; i.e., He is unhappy with what He has done, depressed about what has happened to His creation, to His “experiment,” so He decides to destroy it and to start anew with Noah.⁷ However, in order to rationalize His radical decision, God must place the blame somewhere else; He must find a reason other than His own failure in order to justify His actions. He finds that reason in human sin. Human beings will pay the price for God’s mistake. God convinces Himself (and readers of the biblical text) that the real reason for the Flood is human corruption when, in fact, human corruption is but an after-the-fact rationalization of His already-made decision to destroy the world because He is unhappy with His own work, with His own creation. Unless one argues, as do the rabbis, that the animals also “sinned” and required punishment, it would not follow that human sin requires the obliteration of *all* life, rather than just of human life. From this line of interpretation it would seem that God’s decision to destroy the world does not have human sin as its *primary* cause. Rather, the *primary* cause of His decision is His unhappy realization that He failed as a Creator. Human sin emerges either as a secondary cause of His decision, a rationalization after the fact to “justify” His decision; or, as the catalyst that provokes His awareness of His failure as a Creator, of His frustration as an artist.

After the Flood, God observes that evil is part of human nature (Gen. 8:21). But, if He knew this at the outset, how could human evil justify His decision to destroy humankind (Gen. 6:5)? Perhaps because it was not

7. On creation as an experiment that failed, see the science fiction story by Nelson Bard, “The Cunning of the Beast,” in M. Mohs, ed., *Other Worlds, Other Gods* (New York: Avon, 1971), pp. 19-39.

human corruption that led to his decision to obliterate the world, but, rather, His realization that His creation was not what He had hoped it would be.

Every artist, "every creator painfully experiences the chasm between his inner vision and its ultimate expression," Isaac Bashevis Singer once observed.⁸ God, maintains Singer, is no different.

Like an artist venting passionate, destructive rage at a failed creation rather than at himself, God vents His self-disappointment at the world. The product of artistic creation is made to pay the price of the artist's disappointment with the way that it turned out. God's world emerges flawed from His hands. The execution of the plan was incongruous with the initial design. For the sake of the artist's self-esteem, therefore, the creation must be destroyed. Before he can start anew, the artist must wipe the palette clean. Before He can re-create the world, God must destroy it. God's mistake, and not human sin, ultimately condemns the world to destruction. Artistic rage, and not divine justice, engenders the destruction.

God, the creator, the artist, is not the God of the medieval Jewish philosophers. He is not the static, omnipotent God of the Jewish Aristoteleans. Rather, He is a God of pathos and of passion, a being capable of artistic proclivities such as anger and rage, imagination and fantasy. He is a God who makes mistakes and tries to rectify them. Creation entails destruction; rectification necessitates destruction and renewal. Contrary to popular belief, such a portrait of God is not alien to Jewish theological speculation.

The medieval philosophers press hard to convince us that God must be perceived as a rational, statically perfect being devoid of emotion or of pathos. To ascribe emotion or error to God is, in their view, a mistaken apprehension of the divine which borders on heresy. To be sure, this approach offers a rationalistic view of God, of the world that He created, and of ourselves. The human being, created in God's image, is rational; the human being, following this Aristotelean claim, is the "rational animal." The world is a rational place, following rational laws of cause and effect. In such a world, divine retribution functions with the certainty, the consistency and the rationality of any of the laws of nature. Evil is punished and virtue is rewarded with the same predictable regularity as the sun's rising and the seasons' changing in their ordained sequence.⁹ Evil is the product of human deeds; to imply that God has any relationship to evil is to impugn His perfection.

Such a portrait of reality is very comforting. To live in a rational world, governed by a rational God with fellow humans who think and act

8. I.B. Singer, "Yes," *Esquire* (December, 1975): 253.

9. See Hans Kelsen, "Causality and Retribution," *Journal of the Philosophy of Science*, 8 (1941): 533-556, also in *Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

rationally means that everything is “in order” and “under control.” Everything is predictable, reasonable.

But where do evil, trauma and tragedy fit in to this portrait of reality? How can the rationalist explain the existence of meaningless tragedy, of irrational catastrophe? The answer is: he cannot. As Dostoyevsky observes in *The Brothers Karamazov*, all the wisdom of all the philosophers cannot explain to a mother why she has lost a child. Or, as David Hume reminds us,

Epicurus' old questions are yet unanswered. Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?¹⁰

In other words, the problem of theodicy rests upon three assumptions: God is benevolent. God is omnipotent. Evil is real. Not willing to compromise God's perfection by questioning His benevolence or His omnipotence, rationalistic theologians tend to confront the problem by defining evil out of existence. “Evil,” they claim, is the “privation of the good,” a non-entity.

In order to maintain the rationalistic, mechanistic view, evil is either defined into oblivion, or, human beings are identified as its cause, or both. As the product of human sin, evil becomes rationally explainable. It is the effect of an identifiable cause. Evil which appears to have no identifiable cause appears to be irrational and, therefore, it must be explained away, defined away. Either there is a cause (known, perhaps, only to God) of which we remain unaware, or evil is relegated to being an apparencey rather than a reality.

The linguistic and the intellectual acrobatics of these philosophers try to get God “off the hook” for meaningless suffering and for absurd tragedy. It seems that, to these thinkers, protecting the perfection of God and reaffirming the rational quality of existence is more crucial than forthrightly confronting the problematic existence of inexplicable evil and of pervasive human tragedy. The dysteleological surd — the factor within existence which has no purpose or meaning — cannot be integrated into their neatly systematic apprehension of reality and, therefore, must be swept under the theological rug in order to maintain the notion of a statically perfect and a rigidly rational God.

The dominant Jewish theology of divine retribution that describes God as a celestial accountant tabulating up our debits and our credits in order to determine whether it is “cost effective” to maintain us, pervades biblical, rabbinic and liturgical texts. Though based upon a rationalistic assumption, though positing a cause and effect relationship between sin and punishment in an almost scientific manner, this theology must be severely questioned when it is so facilely applied to enormous human catastrophes such as the European Holocaust and the biblical Flood.

10. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Hafner, 1966), p. 66.

From this perspective, God brings the Flood because human beings are morally bankrupt; it is no longer rational for Him to sustain the human species. An alternative theology would portray God as a creative artist who has successes and failures, triumphs and mistakes, who acts with irrational passion as well as with rational method.

It is no more anthropomorphic to portray God as a frustrated artist than it is to portray Him as a totally rational being. All concepts of God, deriving as they do from the human mind and heart, are necessarily anthropomorphic. Indeed, one might suggest that some so-called anthropomorphisms may be, in fact, theomorphisms.¹¹ Both our rational nature and our artistic nature may be reflections of God's nature within us, rather than projections of our nature onto Him.

The nineteenth century Hasidic master, Nahman of Bratzlav, translates the verse in Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our likeness (*kidmutenu*)," as "Let us make man endowed with an imagination."¹² In medieval Hebrew *ha-koah ha-medameh* is the term used to denote the imaginative faculty of the human soul, the human imagination. In Nahman's view, the essential human trait is imagination, creativity, fantasy, and it reflects an attribute of the divine nature.

What we know of God to this point (i.e., Gen. 1:26) in the biblical narrative — that He is a creator — would support the portrayal of the essence of human nature as a reflection of the divine attribute of imagination and creativity. Like God, we can be rational beings, but, like God, we can be, simultaneously, artists, imaginative and irrational beings.

Being of a creative and an artistic temperament, we, like God, share the frustrations endemic to artistic creativity. Like Him, we are susceptible to the foibles and to the mistakes endemic to the artistic process. Like Him, we become aware of the fact that destruction is part and parcel of the process of creation.

As an omnipotent, rational, "divine dictator," God cannot afford to make mistakes, to err; otherwise, His nature would be irredeemably compromised. As an artist, however, He must make mistakes. He must destroy as part of the process of creating. As an artistic creator, it is consistent with His nature to make mistakes, to fail and to begin again.

The notion of God as an artist who fails, as a creator who makes mistakes, is found in rabbinic literature and it is amplified by Jewish mystical literature. Rabbinic literature describes God as continuing to create and to destroy worlds until He manages to create one with which He is sufficiently satisfied:

11. On biblical anthropomorphism see Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), pp. 270-278. Also see Moshe Greenberg, "Anthropopathism in Ezekiel," *Perspectives in Jewish Learning* (Chicago: College of Jewish Studies Press, 1965), vol. 1, pp. 1-11.

12. Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1979), pp. 341-344.

Rabbi Abbahu said: The Holy One, blessed be He, went on creating and destroying worlds until He created this one and declared — This one pleases Me; those did not please Me (*Gen. Rabbah* 3:7, 9:2; *Midrash on Psalms* 34:1).

Thus, God's destruction of the world by the Flood, the destruction of a creation with which He was not satisfied, has precedent.

Reflecting upon this midrash, Isaac Bashevis Singer has observed:

God was for me an eternal belle lettrist. His main attribute was creativity. . . . I quoted to myself that passage from the Midrash that says God created and destroyed many worlds before He created this one. Like my brother and myself, God threw His unsuccessful works into the wastebasket. The flood, the destruction of Sodom, the wanderings of the Jews in the desert, the wars of Joshua, these were all episodes in a divine novel, full of surprise and adventure.¹³

Some rabbinic sources contend that not only is God a fallible creator, but that God's mistakes require rectification by means of the destruction of that which He created with an original flaw, and that He, the creator, is also He, the destroyer. Furthermore, these sources maintain that God's act of destruction is sinful, that in destroying what He created, God sins! Finally, these texts take the radical theological position that human beings can take actions which atone for God's sin. God needs us to redeem His sins. In the Talmud, for example, we read (*Hullin* 60b):

Rabbi Simeon ben Pazzi pointed out a contradiction (between the verses). One verse says, "And God made the two great lights" (*Gen.* 1:16), and immediately the verse continues, "The greater light . . . and the lesser light." The moon said unto the Holy One, blessed be He, "Sovereign of the Universe! Is it possible for two kings to wear one crown?" God answered, "Go then and make thyself smaller." "Sovereign of the Universe!" cried the moon, "Because I have suggested that which is proper, must I then make myself smaller?" . . . On seeing that it (i.e., the moon) would not be consoled, the Holy One, blessed be He, said, "Bring an atonement for Me for making the moon smaller." This is what is meant by Rabbi Simeon bar Lakish when he declared, "Why is it that the he-goat offering offered on the new moon is distinguished in that there is written concerning it 'for the Lord' (*Numb.* 28:15)? Because the Holy One, blessed be he, said, 'Let this he-goat be an atonement for Me for making the moon smaller.'" ¹⁴

The Lurianic kabbalah of the sixteenth century describes destruction, evil and imperfection as necessary aspects of the process of creation. God cannot create without destroying, not because He is necessarily imperfect, but because it is the nature of the creative process to include destruction, and because a creation, by its very nature, must be imperfect. In the Lurianic view, God (*En Sof*) must relinquish absolute perfection in order to become a creator.

The Lurianic doctrine of *zimzum* (divine contraction) has God with-

13. Singer, *loc. cit.*

14. See the discussion in Abraham J. Heschel, *Torah min Ha-Shamayim* (New York: Soncino, 1962), vol. 1, pp. 87-90.

draw into Himself, go into "exile" into Himself, thereby corrupting His initial, absolute perfection, as the first step in the process of creation. Furthermore, the Lurianic concept of "the breaking of the vessels" teaches that there is an initial flaw in creation, and that this cosmic flaw reaches back to the divine creative process itself. And the Lurianic idea of the *parzufim* (faces) relates to the re-creation which must follow the "breaking of the vessels." As in the just-noted talmudic text, the Lurianic kabbalah provides human beings with a role in rectifying God's mistakes, of atoning for the destruction which God implants within the process of creation. Human deeds can reorganize the *parzufim* as a part of the process of *tikkun*, the repair of the flaws which form part of the initial fabric of creation.¹⁵

To return to our initial question of whether God's actions in bringing the Flood were justifiable, we must conclude that they were not. No parent is justified in murdering his children, no matter what gap obtains between the expectations and plans for the child and the actual behavior of that child. One may argue that no great artist or novelist has the right to order his or her creations destroyed, denied to posterity. For example, we laud Max Brod's refusal to obey Kafka's wish that all his manuscripts be burned. We condemn Gauguin's burning of his own paintings. Once the creation leaves the hand of its creator it enjoys a life of its own. To destroy it is murder. For God to have destroyed His creation cannot be justified. In destroying His creatures He is guilty of a crime of passion, of murder, of sin. His actions are inconsistent with a theology of God which holds God to be essentially benevolent and omnipotent, yet merciful. For such a theology, the choice is a cruel God of retribution or a theodical dilemma.¹⁶ However, with a theology of a God both of method and madness, of rationality and passion, of benevolent intent and artistic temperament, His actions may not be rationally justifiable, but they become more comprehensible. The perception of God as being irrational as well as rational, a passionate creator as well as a celestial accountant, represents not merely an alternative theology but, also, an alternative anthropology. If we accept the biblical claim that human beings are created in the divine image, then our perception and our understanding of that image must affect our image of humankind and our self-image as well. As Robert Gordis has put it, "God fashioned one creature, man, 'in His image, according to His likeness' whom He endowed with divine reason and creative capacity, including the ability to re-create the world."¹⁷ Theology and ethics are ultimately intertwined. If we strive for *imitatio*

15. For an excellent summary of the Lurianic view, see Louis Jacobs, *Seeker of Unity* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), pp. 49-64.

16. See, e.g., Robert Gordis, "A Cruel God or None — Is There No Other Choice?," *JUDAISM*, 21:3 (Summer 1972): 277-284.

17. Robert Gordis, *A Faith For Moderns* (New York: Bloch, 1960), p. 175.

dei, if we strive to imitate God in our actions, then our vision of God must be both theologically feasible and morally defensible.

Conclusion

The usually accepted plot of the biblical story of the Flood is open to question and to examination. The applicability of the doctrine of divine retribution to the Flood is at least as problematic as its applicability to the European Holocaust. Therefore, an alternative view of God to the one which underlies the idea of divine retribution may be formulated. The view introduced above is that the Flood was not primarily engendered as punishment for human sin, but, rather, that the primary cause of the Flood was God's dissatisfaction with Himself and with the world that He had created. Furthermore, once the doctrine of divine retribution is no longer seen as a factor in God's destruction of the world by water, one may opt for an alternative theology which would have a concept of a God who is rational, but not *exclusively* so. Such an alternative theology would embrace a God who is a passionate creator rather than a God who is statically perfect. Such a view of God would portray God as being both rational and irrational, sometimes justified — but also sometimes unjustified — in His deeds.

The Bund and the Zionist Movement in the Early Years

LEONARD BLOOM

THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY was a time of suffering and struggle for the Jews of Russia. During this period, the idea of Jews as a nation rather than as a religious community arose and received its first political expression in two movements aiming at finding a place for Jewish life in the modern world — Zionism and Bundism. Rooted in the same environment and crystallizing at the same moment in history, these movements arrived at diametrically opposed analyses and programs for improving the admittedly degraded state of the Jews. Though they struggled bitterly, each came to accept some of the major critical points of the other.

Three factors which changed a formerly undifferentiated Jewish mass into a socially stratified community ready for movement were (1) pogroms, restrictions on Jewish rights and anti-Semitism; (2) the growth of capitalism in Russia, and (3) the decline of small towns through internal migration and emigration.¹ Both Bundism and Zionism were contenders for the political allegiance of the Jewish masses during this period, but an accurate estimate of their relative strengths is difficult, for the Bund was an illegal organization and its activities were severely harassed by the authorities and both organizations exerted influence over many individuals who were not official members. Henry J. Tobias cites 30,000 as a conservative estimate of Bund membership during the 1901-1903 period,² while Leonard Stein cites 25,000 as the membership figure in 1907.³

For the Zionists, the figures were very close to those of the Bund. Stein reports that, in 1913, the Zionist Organization had 36,000 members in Russia while Tobias cites 16,000 as the membership figure for Zionist socialists in 1905.

The beginnings of the Bund are to be found in a group of young assimilated Jews who, in the late 1880s, first embraced the revolutionary philosophy of Marxism. Through political struggle these individuals became involved, in spite of themselves, with members of their own eth-

1. J. Frumkin, ed., *Russian Jewry* (New York, 1966), p. 150.

2. H.J. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia* (Stanford, 1972), p. 239.

3. L. Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York, 1961), p. 69.

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nic group and, by 1897, they had focused their organizational activity on Jewish workers for the purpose of mobilizing them into the broader social democratic movement aimed at toppling the Czarist regime. The Bund dedicated itself to arousing the feeling of class consciousness among Jewish workers, using the Yiddish language as a cultural tool and promoting the struggle of workers against industrial employers. Later, the Bund was among the founders of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1898, and it remained with the Menchevik group in the split of 1912. During the 1920s, while some Bundists tried to maintain an independent organization and others joined the Communist party, government persecution eventually put an end to all of their activities in Russia.

With the German occupation of some areas of Russia in World War I, the Bund established an independent Polish organization in 1917. During the interwar years in Poland, and particularly in the period immediately preceding World War II, the Bund gained wide support in the Jewish community there and, during the Nazi occupation, it played a significant role in the resistance. Today, the Bund has branches in Europe, Israel and the United States and can look proudly at organizations like the Workmen's Circle and the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union for evidence of its continuing impact upon the Jewish community.

While Zionists took as their constituency the whole of the Jewish people, the Bundists focused on the Jewish proletariat in Russia. Whereas Zionists rejected the Diaspora as a situation antithetical to the fruitful development of Jewish life, Bundists accepted it, not merely as the only available one, but as the only legitimate area for Jewish activity. Zionists considered Yiddish a reprehensible jargon and asserted that Hebrew was the true national language; Bundists declared Yiddish to be the true national language and relegated Hebrew to the academic scrapheap. While the founders of the Bund were dedicated more to participation in socialist revolutionary struggle than to the revival of the Jewish people, they did accept "the special task of defending the specific interests of the Jewish workers."⁴ On the other hand, at the founding of the Zionist movement in Basle, in the same year, socialism was not mentioned and, as Walter Laqueur notes, "most of those present would have gingerly rejected any attempt to adulterate Zionism with Socialist ideas."⁵

Bundists responded to the dire economic plight of the Jewish masses by developing an activist movement aimed at ameliorating working conditions and increasing wages by means of the strike weapon. An active strike campaign was waged in the face of employer obstinacy, police harassment and an industrial situation characterized by tiny scattered shops, Jewish employers, and the ambitions of Jewish workers themselves to

4. H.M. Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1958), p. 291.

5. W. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York, 1972), p. 270.

become entrepreneurs. The ideological framework for agitation and propaganda was that Jewish workers suffered primarily because all of the workers of Czarist Russia suffered at the hands of capital and only secondarily as Jews. Destruction of the Czarist regime through revolutionary action, in concert with workers of other ethnic groups, was, thus, the ultimate goal which sparked and illuminated on-going Bundist activity. The necessity of organizing along national lines was dictated by the need to relate to the Jewish workers in their own language, Yiddish, and by the understanding that there were, indeed, some problems special to Jewish workers which might not otherwise be solved with the success of the revolution. The Bund recognized, of course, that anti-Semitism and discrimination against Jewish workers were facts of life in Russia but it understood these phenomena as efforts of the bourgeoisie to subjugate the workers and saw the only possible solution in the success of the revolutionary movement. "National hatred is not caused by human nature but rather in human history; social conditions have produced it in the world, and certain conditions will remove it from the world."⁶

The Bund felt that the Zionist goal of the settlement of Jews in Palestine offered no amelioration for the suffering of millions in Russia. At best, mass settlement was a pipe dream fostered by the Jewish bourgeoisie for the purpose of deflecting the proletariat from the pursuit of its true interests in Russia and, at worst, it was a plan for more effective exploitation of Jewish workers in a Jewish state dominated by the Jewish bourgeoisie.

Zionism, as is known, is a utopia of the Jewish bourgeoisie. According to this fantasy, the Jewish bourgeoisie alone will rule economically, politically and nationally in our land.⁷

To the Bund, anti-Semitism was a product of class warfare and could be defeated only through the successful conclusion of a social revolution in which Jewish workers played a role. The Zionist understanding of the endemic and eternal nature of anti-Semitism was treated by the Bund as an effort to blind Jewish workers to the need for struggle at home. They saw anti-Semitism as an emotion and an expression which would end with the development of class consciousness in gentile workers or, in the words of the Bund's journal, "The development of class consciousness among the Christian proletariat is also the only way to create brotherhood between Christian and Jewish workers."⁸

Zionists, the Bund charged, operated in collusion with royal courts in the acceptance of anti-Semitism, and through collusion with the big-money interests or, more polemically, by "*Shtadlanut*, *protectsia*, and

6. *Di Arbeter Shtime* 33, May 1903.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

buying and selling.”⁹ Comparing the methods of Zionists and Bundists, *Di Arbeter Shtime* quoted the Zionists ironically as saying,

Give us a few million rubles and we will buy you independence; we will make all mankind happy (adding, more editorially,) . . . the power of money is, for them, the greatest power. Bundists, on the other hand, feel the power of money in another way. We know that the banks, the capitalistic enterprises, cause our persecution and the exploitation of our class and rob us of our independence. . . .¹⁰

Bundists were infuriated by the lack of concern on the part of the Zionists for the contemporary condition of the Jews of Russia. Reporting on one of the early Zionist Congresses, *Di Arbeter Shtime* told its readers that,

The Congress has shown us that the Zionists speak freely and openly and enthusiastically only when they touch on questions which are far from life. “Jewish Independence,” “Survival of the People,” “Unity of Judaism,” “Salvation of Mankind.” Nothing of substance, however, for the workers. In regard to the most important question for the worker, the Congress did nothing. All the broad plans and projects on how to save the Jews and all mankind, all the loud speeches, the enthusiasm which the Zionists say ruled there, expressed itself in a few weak, limping demands which were expressed half-heartedly and had not the slightest meaning for anyone.¹¹

Bundists were deeply resentful of the Zionists’ avowed lack of concern for political work in Russia, their declarations of loyalty to the Czarist regime, and the collusion, real or imagined, between Zionists and Czarist police officials. Reacting to a statement by a Zionist leader who assured loyalty to the regime at the All Russian Zionist Conference in Minsk, in August, 1902, the Bund journal declared,

Vasilev, the colonel of gendarmes, and the Zionists, what is the connection between them? What connects the whipper of Jewish workers with the liberators of the Jewish people? . . . To one of the worst tormentors of Jewish workers, the Zionists turn with pleas about permission to hold their meeting in Minsk . . . The Zionists . . . kissed a hand splashed in the blood of Jewish workers . . . How can we pay attention to an ideological opponent who has such a slavish understanding of elementary dignity?¹²

Economic analyses of the Jewish situation in Russia provided still another area for disagreement and polemic. Zionists argued that the Jewish masses were undergoing leveling through impoverishment, while, for the Bundists, the salient factor was the development of proletarian and bourgeois classes among the Jewish population. The Zionist denial of the existence of class struggle among Jews was treated by the Bund as a serious threat lest potential activists be drawn away from revolutionary and toward territorial movements. A Zionist leader in Minsk in 1902 stated,

9. *Di Arbeter Shtime* 40, September 1905.

10. *Di Arbeter Shtime* 21, January 1901.

11. Ibid.

12. G. Aronson, ed., *Di Geschichte fun Bund* (New York, 1960), Vol. I, p. 347.

"We need fear no class war because, among us, there are no classes. We have no land, we have no factories, and we have no workers."¹³ To which the Bund's reply was, "And what do you think? That the Jewish proletariat can't struggle, . . . that among the Jews there are no classes, no capitalists, no workers, no persecuted people . . ."¹⁴ While Zionists painted rosy pictures of Jewish unity, future independence and national revival, they were, as far as the Bund was concerned, malevolently furthering the interests of the Jewish bourgeoisie by teaching potential Jewish revolutionaries that the class struggle was not taking place within Jewry. While the Zionists talked about the Jewish State to appear in the far, far distant future, Bundists were involved in organizing exploited workers, conducting strikes and negotiating with Jewish employers, many of whom, incidentally, were Zionists. In a report on a strike in Grodno, the employer was described as "a fiery Zionist . . . who . . . poured rivers of tears on the spiritual poverty of the Jewish nation . . . while he impoverished his beloved brothers."¹⁵

The Po'alei Zion Labor Zionists, while asserting the need for class struggle, enrolling proletarian membership, and struggling for economic improvements, refused to participate in the international socialist movement in the Diaspora, determining, instead, to strive first for a Jewish state and afterward for international revolution. While the Bund's position toward the Zionist movement, in general, was characterized by single-minded opposition and derision, its reaction to the Labor Zionists was less certain. It regarded Po'alei Zion as a kind of Trojan Horse of the Zionist movement, for, "to fight the Bund . . . is one of the practical products of the Jewish bourgeoisie; to achieve this aim it has found a new organization . . . Po'alei Zion."¹⁶ The Bund charged Labor Zionism with muddling the revolutionary consciousness of the Jewish workers. "To remove the Jewish workers' class consciousness, one must dress Zionism in a worker's shirt with a thin thread connected to a red stripe."¹⁷

The efforts at self-defense following the Kishinev pogrom in 1903 provided an opportunity for Bundists and Zionists to work cooperatively. Although their long-range goals and analyses were at odds, the immediate demand for self-defense was recognized by both parties. In the economic area, though, the pressures for cooperation were less intense and the Bund's attitude more ambiguous; there were even periods and incidents of common struggle. A Bundist Committee resolution asserted that

As an opponent of Zionism it will use . . . all methods in agitation and literature to fight it. But among "social democratic workers and the Zionist workers," to the extent that they belong to the same organization and take

13. Tobias, p. 249.

14. Aronson, Vol. I, p. 346.

15. Ibid., p. 348.

16. *Di Arbeter Shtime* 33, May 1903.

17. Ibid.

part in the same struggle with the bosses, there should be, in our opinion, no hostility.¹⁸

In time, however, the strains of economic cooperation became unsupportable and, at its Sixth Conference in February, 1905, the Bund resolved, "to rule out any working arrangement with parties that did not demand a democratically elected constituent assembly and also with any group that aimed at the disorganization of the Jewish proletariat."¹⁹

The Bund has been remarkably consistent in its anti-Zionist position over the years. In its first postwar international conference in 1947 it denounced Zionism as an ideology unable to help the great majority of Jews and resolved that "the struggle against the theory and practices of Zionism not be discontinued." After the establishment of the State in 1948 the Bund, recognizing Israel as a "home and state for the Jews living there," maintained strongly that Israel was not the homeland of all Jews. The Bund felt that the existence of the state would exacerbate conflict between Jews and Arabs and promote Jewish chauvinism. In a more recent formulation on Zionism, the Bund demanded that Israeli Jews accept the idea that Jewish nationality is worldwide; insisted that the program of "ingathering of the exiles" expressed an unacceptable "national superiority complex" and ought to be eliminated; demanded equality for the Yiddish language in Israel and an end to "a persecution of Yiddish and violent Hebraization," and called for the replacement of the present state by a "truly democratic Jewish-Arab federation."²⁰

18. Aronson., Vol. I, p. 352.

19. Tobias, p. 321.

20. E. Scherer, "Bundism," in Vlavianos and Gross, eds., *Struggle for Tomorrow* (New York, 1954), p. 154.

Mircea Eliade and the Jewish Holy Day

ARYEH WINEMAN

MIRCEA ELIADE, THE ROMANIAN-BORN scholar who taught for many years at the University of Chicago, has vastly enriched the study and understanding of religion and ritual. Drawing upon religious beliefs, rites and folk-practices of many cultures and traditions, he has synthesized findings to suggest certain patterns which are transcultural in that they cast light upon religion in primitive societies and archaic civilizations as well as upon historical, religious and spiritual traditions of both the Eastern and Western worlds.

One of the most interesting subjects in Eliade's writings is his theory of sacred time. The holyday and its rite, in this wide spectrum of cultures and traditions, is understood as the attempt to return to a time of the "beginnings," the time of creation which differs from the kind of time which we normally experience. Unlike historical, chronological, profane time which necessarily involves flux and deterioration, the time of the beginnings has a different quality; it is felt to be a "strong" time, pure and untarnished, when the active, creative presence of the divine makes for a primordial fullness of life.

While time as we know it is irreversible, according to Eliade the time of the beginnings is felt to be indefinitely recoverable. To the rites of the festival is attributed that capacity to bring back the primordial time, a time of the past which can also be made present. Those who recite a myth of origins or participate in its accompanying ritual feel themselves immersed in that strong, sacred, primordial time. In primitive cultures, for example, the method of healing is that of re-creation by means of just such a return to the time of beginnings, allowing one to be immersed in that primordial fullness of life and energy. It is these qualities, lost through the passage of profane time, which are nevertheless believed to be recoverable on occasions of sacred time. On the festival, man not only recounts but actually relives the creation of the world and he, too, feels himself created anew, liberated from his burden of sins and of degeneration and able to experience the world with the freshness, the purity and vitality of the moment of creation. All is bathed in a renewed energy.¹

It should be obvious that the examples of sacred time in Jewish tradi-

1. Eliade's discussions of sacred time can be found in several of his books, among them *The Sacred and the Profane*, chapter 1; *Myth and Reality*, chapters 2-3; *Myths, Rites, Symbols, A Mircea Eliade Reader*, ed. Beame and Doty, Vol. 1, chapters 1-2.

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tion are far too complex to be explainable in terms of a single underlying concept. Nevertheless, a reading of Eliade's discussions of sacred time evokes the question whether the Sabbath and the holydays of the Jewish year give expression, in their own way, to that same sense of reliving the time of beginnings and the accompanying sense of renewal which Eliade claims to be the root-experience of sacred time.

The Sabbath is multithematic in its emphases. In the two versions of the Decalogue in the Torah it is explained respectively as "a remembrance of Creation" and as "a remembrance of the exodus from *Mizrayim*." Eliezer Azikri,² back in the sixteenth century, explained the three traditional meals of the Sabbath as referring to creation, revelation and redemption respectively, the same thematic framework upon which Franz Rosenzweig, in our own century, offered his descriptive interpretation of the Sabbath.³ The first of these, the theme of creation, is implied already in the second chapter of Genesis, suggesting a basic significance of the day as a weekly, recurrent celebration of Creation. The words of the Sabbath Psalm, *bema'ase yadekha aranen* ("I will sing out joyously in the works of Your hands" [Ps. 92:5]), convey a key aspect of the experience of the Shabbat as a day in which one can much more fully appreciate the world as a gift from God, a given period of time in which, with one's whole being, one is aware of the wonder and marvel of that world which can often become blurred during the six days of worldly endeavors. It is a day in which it is possible to rejoice in one's very existence and in a world, not of our own making, which appears to us as though it now came forth from beneath the hands of the Creator, fresh and pure. In his interpretation of the ritual preceding the evening Sabbath meal, Franz Rosenzweig made that kind of connection when he likened the taste of the wine and bread used on that occasion to that of the very first wine and bread ever made by man from the yield of earth and vine.⁴

Some of the roots of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can be traced to the spring New Year festival in ancient Mesopotamia even while the festival underwent definite metamorphoses to express the world-view of biblical and rabbinic Judaism.⁵ In Mesopotamia, it was the occasion of the reciting of the creation myth as part of an involved eleven-day ritual, a recitation and rite in which, again according to Eliade's understanding, the primordial past, the time of creation, recurred and became present. And, turning to a medieval *piyyut* describing the departure of the high

2. *Sefer haredim*, Part I, chapter 6.

3. *The Star of Redemption*, tr. W. Hallo, pp. 311-314.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

5. In his studies of the Psalms, the Norwegian Biblical scholar, Sigmund Mowinckel, went much beyond the impact of the seasonal factor suggested here in his attempt to reconstruct biblical holydays patterned after the Babylonian Akita festival with its rite of enthronement. Many feel today that Mowinckel exaggerated the relationship between the biblical and Babylonian festivals.

priest from the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, might one not hear an echo of that experience when the poet said of the high priest at that moment, "As the Garden of Eden is the earth before him"?⁶

Or, do we witness the same basic impulse and experience of re-creation, drawn from the soil of archaic, pre-biblical religion but transformed to mirror the value-concepts of biblical and rabbinic Judaism, in a statement found in various texts of the talmudic-midrashic literature: "God says, when you are gathered in judgment before Me on Rosh Hashanah and go forth in peace (acquitted), I consider it as if you were created a new being"?⁷ Or, "Remake yourselves by *teshuvah* during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and on the Day of Atonement I will hold you guiltless, regarding you as a newly-made creature"?⁸ In a similar vein, the *lulav* and *etrog* are explained as means of praising God on the part of those who were created anew, as it were, through repentance on the holydays preceding the Sukkot festival.⁹ In these sources, it is the Jewish pattern of self-questioning and self-accounting, of regret and repentance which constitutes the way to acquire a renewed self and to experience oneself as re-created. The original, archaic impulse is preserved even while it is transposed in the prism of a moral and monotheistic faith.

Just as, according to a view expressed in a hasidic source, the ultimate purpose of setting apart specific days as sacred time is to bring all time within the orbit of the sacred,¹⁰ so every occasion of prayer, even on an ordinary weekday, can ideally be regarded as an occasion of renewal, as an event of re-creation both of the self and of the way one experiences one's world. Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, who made a point of going out to the field or to the woods for personal contemplative prayer and who directed his followers to follow his example, is quoted as saying:

One who engages in prayer in the fields and forests can experience Paradise in his every step there, and even after returning from one's place of prayer in nature, the world appears entirely new to him, totally different from the way he had previously experienced it.¹¹

Each morning the Jew is to praise God "who renews in His goodness, each

6. *Avodah* of Yom Kippur by Moses Ibn-Ezra. *Avignon Rite* (Amsterdam, 1766), p. 98.

7. Jerusalem Talmud, *Rosh Hashanah* 59c, in the name of Eleazer ben Jose.

8. *Pesikta rabbati*, tr. Braude, II, pp. 710-711, Piska 40.5, in the name of R. Isaac. See also *Vayikra rabbah* 29:12.

9. *Midrash tehillim*, 102:3; also *Pesikta rabbati* 51:5.

10. Rabbi Judah Aryeh Lev Alter of Gur (1840-1905), *Sefar emet, Emor*. In his comments relating to the same portion of Leviticus, Rabbi Isaac Alter suggests that, initially, prior to the sin of Adam, all time had the quality of sacred time. The holy days of the Torah serve to preserve that quality of time on certain designated days to the end that, in the future, all time might again be sacred.

11. Quoted in *Hishlaphkhot hanefesh* (Jerusalem, 1978), #43, p. 44.

day continually, the work of Creation"¹² and, being part of that Creation, each person should emerge renewed.

Eliade locates the fundamental underlying religious model in a pattern of birth, death and rebirth. The moments of rebirth in nature echo that primordial time of creation as the two merge together on the level of religious experience. The Jewish year marks the renewal of vegetative life in the spring of the year in various ways but essentially in the Passover festival. In *Pesah*, nature and history parallel one another so that the flourishing of new life in nature serves as a kind of parable of a new beginning in history. The human-historical-spiritual dimension interweaves with the patterns and cycles of nature.

What of the autumn and the series of Jewish holydays which fall during the autumn month of Tishre? Do they fit into a similar kind of pattern in which man's spiritual life interweaves with changes in nature at that time of year? Does seasonal change provide a key to the personal and group renewal which is to accompany the holydays and festivals of Tishre?

Yosef Schechter,¹³ the Israeli educator and thinker, prolific writer and former principal of the Reali Secondary School in Haifa, locates the key to understanding the holydays of Tishre — Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot through Shemini ha'azeret (and Simḥat Torah) — in their seasonal context in the climate of the land of Israel and the eastern Mediterranean. They begin toward the end of the long dry season during which nature appears more and more desolate, deprived of the blessings of rainfall. The face of nature conveys a sense of tiredness as well as of dryness. Both in nature and in the human person, summer becomes a time of weariness and inaction. But in approaching the end of that season there is an expectation of change and a yearning to awaken from the slumber-like mood of summer.

This expectation and yearning that is sensed in nature is shared by man. Schechter finds in the blast of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah a suggestion of imminent awakening and renewal, a call for both nature and man to return to a fulness of life following a more death-like state. The renewal of energy requires, however, the endeavor of purification. That purification, represented by the biblical rite of the sending of the scapegoat bearing the sins of the people out into the wilderness,¹⁴ is of pronounced psychological-spiritual significance. The demonic which must be cast out of the camp of life and out of the community is explained by Schechter as consisting of cynicism, lack of ideals, indifference, boredom, the lack of a true feeling of meaningfulness in life. Those negative quali-

12. From the *shaharit* liturgy.

13. "Teshuvah vehidush bazman hazeh" *Prozdor* III (1962), pp. 3-6.

14. Leviticus 15.

ties accumulate during the course of time and must be cast off to allow for a renewal on the human level.

Following the rite of purification, the Jew comes to Sukkot, "a prelude to the year's rainfall, to a renewal of the relation between heaven and earth." With rainfall, a bridge is restored between heaven and earth on a physical level; that same kind of bridge can be restored also on the human and spiritual level with a renewed sense of meaning and worthwhileness in life. In this way man integrates his own life with the rhythms of nature and with nature's renewal with rainfall.

Through the process of *teshuvah*, man begins again "to live in a new time, in a pure, unstained time." Note the clear echo of Eliade's sense of the essential experience of the holyday. Following the long "thinning out of meaningfulness," the joy of Sukkot, in Schechter's interpretation, "flows from that feeling that we begin to live in a time of freshness and vitality."

In his essay on the holydays of Tishre, Schechter has translated part of Eliade's theory into the language of the Jewish year. Unlike the tendency associated with Yehezkel Kaufmann who accentuated the clear and pronounced line separating biblical religion from pre-biblical religion and myth, Schechter has argued the need to stress, on another level, the continuity between pre-biblical and biblical religions and the underlying psychological-spiritual impulses common to both.¹⁵ Among these is the will to awaken from a spiritual slumber and to integrate one's life and being with the season of renewal in nature.

He explains that the process of renewal at that time of year is, of course, dependent upon the human person. It requires reflection and concentration of the total self to achieve liberation from the demonic qualities of cynicism and indifference, to affirm one's personhood, to connect with the divine which transcends the self, and to strive for true community. Spiritual concentration is a prerequisite to that re-creation, which is the aspiration underlying the holy day.

For us, as Jews, the Shabbat and the holydays, the occasions of sacred time, are an extremely important part of our lives. The insights of Eliade, along with Schechter's attempt to apply them to the Jewish year and ritual-pattern, may help to bring us nearer to the root-experience of sacred time.

15. Y. Schechter, *Limude hayahadut behinukh ha'al-yesodi*, (Tel-Aviv, 1963), p. 55.

Bar Kokhba and Begin — Were Both Leaders Mistaken?

Review-Essay by JOSEPH P. STERNSTEIN

The Bar Kokhba Syndrome: Risk and Realism in International Politics. By YEHOASHAFAT HARKABI. Chappaqua, New York. Rossel Books, 1983. 206 pp., \$15.95.

THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK IS A RECOGNIZED and respected military scholar who serves presently as Professor of International Relations and Middle East Studies at the Hebrew University. He has a distinguished record of military service, ranging from the Armistice negotiations at Rhodes in 1949 to his incumbency as Chief of Military Intelligence, having retired from the IDF with the rank of Major General.

A briefer substance of the thesis of this volume was originally published as an article in *Ma-ariv*, one of Israel's leading dailies, and provoked a stormy controversy. It was further expanded into a Van Leer Institute booklet, and subsequently elaborated further into this volume.

The political rationale emerged from the author's close scrutiny of the Bar Kokhba rebellion, 132-135 C.E., and his analysis persuaded him that the revolt, so heroically apotheosized by Jewish nostalgia, was really ill-conceived and inherently abortive from its inception, ineluctably plunging the Jewish people into destruction and devastation, a perennial state of tragic affairs from which we did not emerge until today. *It was ill-conceived because it was unrealistic*, unrealistic in metaphoric terms, because it "built a bridge only to the middle of the river," with no clear planning and foresight as to how it would reach the opposite shore. A vital element of the risks of this "unrealism" was the unforgivable sin of "placing national existence in ultimate jeopardy." To rephrase Samson's *cri de coeur*, it was "let my life be destroyed with — the Jews!" No risk is worth the attempt if the very existence of the Jewish people perches precariously in danger.

Moreover, if the military odds are insurmountable and if the array of the adversary's forces is so unbeatable, *and they should have been perceived as such*, then any military undertaking would be inevitably doomed to

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defeat. Rather than launch combat, the *realistic* route was that of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, who was prepared to *live* under the rule of the Romans, rather than die fighting them. (Would I be rendering an injustice to the author if we adapted the apothegm "better Red than dead" to an appreciation of "realism"?)

Let me note an additional aspect of Professor Harkabi's thesis, which is significantly extrapolated (as I shall consider later) to current issues, as imbedded in the "risk and unrealism" of Bar Kokhba's Revolt: the element of rigid and straitjacketing "ideology." In the conduct of international affairs, one must, at *almost* all costs, retain strategic flexibility and resiliency in confronting a foe, one must be prepared to compromise, concede and yield when it is evident that "victory" (whatever definition one wishes to attribute to this nomenclature) is "unattainable" (this term, too, is subject to varied appraisals).

The Bar Kokhba Revolt is meticulously differentiated from three previous military situations — the destruction of the two Temples and the Hasmonean Rebellion — and an attempt is made to disentangle the skein of generic Jewish calamities and fix the parameters of their historical impact (for we cannot forget that even the Hasmonean Rebellion did not, over the long pull, eventuate in unmixed blessings for the Jews).

The furor surrounding the publication of Professor Harkabi's thesis clearly was not provoked by an academic dispute over episodes of early Jewish history, and his critics were not reticent to note this discernible inference. Professor Harkabi himself did not conceal his desire to derive a *nimshal* from his historical *mashal*, as it were. He pointed to the contemporary application of his thesis: the policy of the Begin — and, consequentially, the Shamir — government is "*unrealistic*" in every geopolitical sense of the term, and hence is leading Israel to a political, and possibly even a military, debacle.

An interesting footnote. In the summer of 1983, Professor Harkabi privately circulated a document entitled "Strategy for the Struggle Against the Likud." As he characterized it, "since I was writing a confidential document, I phrased it in shorthand and perhaps too harshly, and this I regret. But I do not retreat from the ideas I expressed." The "document" was leaked and its publication aroused another storm of controversy. Essentially, the argument in this document, and I note it because it is germane to our consideration, was that the rigid Revisionist "ideological" proclivity of the Begin government was thoroughly deleterious to the interests of Israel, and was vulnerable to a successful political and electoral onslaught.

Professor Harkabi posits two historical premises in developing his position: first, a "revision and reinterpretation of the Bar Kokhba Rebellion as a decisive event in Jewish history." Second, "altering the view of the Jewish past . . . may have a beneficial influence on current Israeli political behavior."

This is a serious, important and responsible book. Enhancing the credentials of the author as a careful and judicious thinker are the laudable style and philosophical sobriety of his analysis. In the midst of flailing fury emanating from all sides of the political arena of Israeli concerns, it is good to salute measured expression and thought.

So, if it is so good, why does the book trouble me?

It does so on three counts. Let me state the issues briefly and then elaborate. *First*, while the dissection of the Bar Kokhba Rebellion is studiously and assiduously performed, as would befit a military historian who would wish to teach his students to avoid errors in military combat, it remains a historical study: that and no more. In crass terms, Professor Harkabi is a "Monday morning quarterback," assaying his relentless, and indeed ruthless, analysis really in hindsight. *Second*, I submit that, regardless of Harkabi's disavowal, the implications of his thesis as applied to military uprisings would stifle practically every war or rebellion, guerrilla or otherwise, just or otherwise, against a quantitatively superior force. *Third*, I am persuaded that Harkabi stumbles badly in the extrapolation and application of his thesis to contemporary events, and — I say this with respect — even fails to conceal the jaundice of his ideological and political Labor Party allegiances. He commits, in my judgment, the most egregious sin that can be attributed to a historian: he permits his prejudices to tincture and stain his otherwise honest and scrupulous military and geopolitical treatment.

The first issue responds to Harkabi's thesis that the Rebellion was an irresponsible military initiative, wilfully disregarding insurmountable Roman superiority, opportunistically and callously rejecting the responsible, wise and cautious Rabbinic desire to accommodate Jewish life to a *modus vivendi* or, at the least, co-existence with a *relatively* (I underscore this word) benign Roman hegemony.

Yet even Harkabi himself admits that the Rebellion was not a reckless, impetuous and precipitate action. He quotes historical scholarship as characterizing the rebellion as resulting from "exacting preparations and strict planning." Further, it demonstrated "the Jewish ability to practice self-control and to calculate their activities carefully" (p. 28). Moreover, "the description of detailed planning and the delay to some appropriate time in starting the rebellion flatly contradict any tendency to present it as simply a spontaneous popular uprising" (p. 29).

Yet, Harkabi turns logic on its head. Were this to have been an emotional and wanton act, he implies, it could have been excused; because it was premeditated, planned and prepared, Bar Kokhba should have known better and, therefore, is to be condemned for having initiated the conflict. One is truly puzzled by Harkabi's reasoning.

The treatment of "Bar Kokhba the Man" is harsh and unforgiving. The author quotes various Rabbinic passages depicting Bar Kokhba's authoritarianism and portrays *almost* uniform Rabbinic antipathy to his

alleged arrogance and wilfullness. One must say “almost,” for even a child in *heder* has heard of the respect and support for him by the great Rabbi Akiba. On this issue, in my view, Harkabi trips up: If Bar Kokhba was so wrong, how *do* you account for the allegiance of Akiba — one of the acknowledged giants of Jewish spirit? This awesome question cannot be dismissed by Harkabi’s self-serving and gratuitous statement: “Akiba was a great teacher of Torah, but he did not distinguish himself in political understanding . . .” Even Harkabi concedes that this problem is “vexing.” He does slip in the defensive term “may” in what appears to be a confident and magisterial analysis of Akiba’s derelictions, but, truth to tell, his failure to answer this question leaves a grave lacuna in his characterization of Bar Kokhba.

An additional point. Historical evidence points to the fact that the Rebellion scored many substantial initial successes. It was only after Rome was compelled to ferry in contingents of reinforcements that the tide of battle turned in its favor. Bar Kokhba exacted a huge Roman price before the Rebellion was crushed. Now, many lessons could be derived from this series of events. But, surely, even as respected a general as Harkabi cannot dismiss and condemn every military action because one of the parties was defeated.

Was there no provocation for this uprising? Was there no extenuation to dilute Harkabi’s criticisms? Were the Jews cavalierly, opportunistically and wantonly “thirsting for a fight,” a fight which had no merit at all, and which could have been avoided by accommodation, by judicious compromise, by concessions, by yielding? Hadrian, it must be admitted, was at the outset a relatively lenient suzerain. But his attitude changed. He forbade circumcision, sought to convert Jerusalem into a pagan Roman city and generally assumed a steadily hardening authority. It was then that the uprising was conceived. In the increasingly ominous climate that was inexorably strangling Jewish spiritual life, what would General Harkabi have done?

We thus deal with the second problem: if the enemy is quantitatively larger — much, much larger (the ratio may be unknown) — should one desist from revolution, uprising, rebellion? Would such an uprising be “unrealistic,” “risky” to the point of suicide? Intertwined with this problem in a reprehensible nexus is the allegation that a rigid and intractable “ideology” disregards realism in its quest for consummation, even to the point where the interests of the People and the State are sacrificed. It is with reference to the latter issue that Harkabi regrettably reveals a political orientation which mars objective considerations. Even his repeated use of propagandistic semantics indicates his *a priori* prejudices: Labor has been “flexible” and “judicious”; Herut has been “unrealistic” and “desirous of using force . . . with avidity.”

Let us, however, revert to the main issue. Does history bear out the contention that smaller forces cannot hope to nullify overwhelming mili-

tary size? Surely, none of us would be hard put to find geo-political-military examples in abundance to contradict this thesis. Without ranging afield or examining the entire globe of the world, I wish to focus on Jewish experience. In 1942, the Biltmore Conference, prodded by Ben Gurion, articulated the call for a "Commonwealth." (Incidentally, this incontrovertible historical fact stands in flat refutation of Harkabi's assertion that "Labor was fearful of premature presentation of proposals" [p. 137].) Weizmann resisted, desiring accommodation with the British, but was defeated. One could respond: The Biltmore Platform was but rhetorical! This was not a military action. True, but it began to sound the tocsin. December 1946, the 22nd World Zionist Congress in Basle: again Ben Gurion, in alliance with Abba Hillel Silver, pressed for physical resistance. Weizmann, again, desired accommodation. This time, Weizmann was ejected from office. The third example: the resistance of the Yishuv against the overwhelming might of Great Britain, and the success of this resistance. And then, the War of Liberation; who, more than General Harkabi, knew the odds? And who, more than General Harkabi, knows the outcome?

It is the area represented by the third issue that clearly points to the intent of Harkabi, viz., to deduce guideposts for contemporary political action. He asks: "Is the Current Israeli Policy Realistic?" This, indeed, is the nub of the problem and we must assess the issue with him on the substantive levels of Israeli political debate.

It is ironic and imperative, at the outset, to quote what he says: "Until 1967, Israel was, for the most part, a land of *practical, realistic vision*, and our attainments won great admiration in the world" (author's italics) (p. 138). He continues with a jeremiad on contrasting conditions after 1967, bemoaning the upsurge of "fantasy" and "mythical orientation of unreality." I wish only to note the political fact that it was, perforce, the Labor Government — not the "unrealistic" Begin Government — which remained in power for *ten years* subsequent to 1967 — not an inconsiderable time span!

I wish to pose several questions: First, in the *mis-en-scène* of contemporary political developments, what is "realistic"? Second, whose tactics are such? Third, should allegations of such "unrealism" be directed to the current Israeli Government, or is it not true that the currently prevailing Israeli political approach — allowing for differences in political party labels — is basically consistent with the stance of all previous governments?

The bottom line of Harkabi's thesis is that we must accommodate ourselves to (a) the inevitability and potency of Arab intransigence and expanding strength, and (b) to world censure of Israeli "rigidity." This is "realistic." In developing the thesis, Harkabi makes forays into rather puzzling and self-serving theological analyses — e.g., his interpretation and translation of the passage "*umipnei hata'einu galinu mei'arzenu*"

(because of our sins we were exiled from our land) is untenably inaccurate — and also sets up political straw men in the delineation of those ideological opponents of his argument by the banal depiction of extremes which are vulnerable to attack. Such, for example, is his description of “secular” and “religious” orientations. Here and there he slips in a modifying and self-protective caveat, but these adventitious statements can only be deduced as an attempt to ward off a challenge of intellectual dishonesty. I discern this particularly in his critique of the Israeli response to Arab demands. Be more forthcoming, he enjoins. In many cases, you cannot blame the Arabs. But then comes the caveat: true, the Arabs are frequently immoderate and avaricious.

This, however, is precisely the issue. As of this writing it is imputed to President Mubarak, so far without denial, that he practically renounced the Camp David accords and the Peace Treaty: Egypt has obtained all that it wanted — the Sinai, its oil, etc. — and therefore, says King Hassan of Morocco quoting Mubarak, the Camp David accords are totally empty of further substance and value for Egypt. That country can then retreat further from those accords. Is it, therefore, “realism” or “unrealism” to be tough and hard in bargaining for position with the Arabs?

This strategic as well as tactical jockeying is reminiscent of the Jewish debate of 1946 and 1947 in response to the Partition Proposals. The Weizmann-Goldmann group advocated outright acceptance, while Silver and his supporters urged initial rejection. (Parenthetically, it is historically untrue to impute to Silver obdurate and intractable rejection of Partition. He urged, rather, that our immediate acceptance would be taken as the maximum, and our enemies would begin to whittle down from that point. This tactical perception would be of value to us today, as well.)

Is it inevitable that the Arabs will grow in strength? Prophecy, notes Rabbinic teaching, is for children or fools. Yet, is the most ruthlessly wielded Arab instrument — oil — growing or withering in economic and political potency? Is Arab “unity” — that vaunted threat — any nearer to reality today than it was at the beginning of the century? All of this is not to insist that we should blindly turn away from opportunities that the throw of geo-political dice can reveal to us. Israeli diplomacy must be resilient, adept, dextrous and opportunistic. Indeed, Israel need not recoil from a little bit of Machiavellian dissembling, disingenuousness and even “dishonesty,” attributes that are the stock in trade of the sordid diplomatic world in which we live — and which others use with alacrity and without compunction against it. Yet, the antithetical quality, failure of nerve, can also be fatal.

But, to the main issue. How should Israel react to world opinion and to world censure? What “world opinion”? The United Nations? “World opinion,” for example, as manifested in the monstrously inaccurate media reporting of the Lebanese campaign? “World opinion” as reflected in the pathology of a George Ball or the *Selbsthass* of an Anthony Lewis?

Or the sanctimonious lectures on morality with which Israeli leadership has always been bludgeoned, Ben Gurion no less than Begin, Golda Meir no less than Shamir?

Thus, we enter the arena of the second question: Whose tactics are “realistic” or “unrealistic”?

One, surely, cannot ignore the onerous, agonizing and painful burden borne by Israel — in precious lives and taxing financial strain — in defense of its position. Would it, however, be easier were Israel to yield positions *prior* to honest give-and-take negotiations? I am profoundly skeptical.

Harkabi's strictures are directed at the “unrealism” of the present government. His animadversions trace these allegations even to the pre-State era. Yet, as I noted above, it was Ben Gurion who, at the Biltmore Conference in 1942, led the fight against the Weizmann position which castigated the former as “premature,” and pressed for the immediate proclamation of the “State” concept.

Careful analysis of post-State political history shows convincingly that both Ben Gurion and his successors, including Golda Meir, again and again adopted positions that, through the prism of Harkabi's perspective, would have been considered “unrealistic.” Even the events of the 1956 Sinai Campaign — in its convoluted totality — could be understood in this light. In this point, I am not searching for a *hekhsher*, an imprimatur; rather, I urge a degree of humility and flexibility for the author.

At the end, one cannot help but put this important volume down with the conviction that the historical trap of ideological rigidity which the author wishes to attribute to the present Israeli government, really has ensnared him.

Jesus In His Day

Jesus In Focus: A Life In Its Setting.
By GERARD S. SLOYAN. Mystic,
Connecticut. Twenty-Third Publi-
cations. 1983, 212 pp.

Reviewed by MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD

THE life of Jesus has fascinated many writers. Since almost everything we know about that life is derived from the gospels, it would seem that the best possible biography is contained in those very gospels. Nevertheless, the temptation to get behind them also seems great, partly because there are four gospels and it would be nice to shape one authoritative account from them. Further, the gospels were written not by journalists or historians who were interested in reporting events neutrally, but by deeply committed believers who were telling a story from their own point of view. The modern reader would like to find out what really happened, what is the story as it would have been reported by a neutral journalist relatively free of presuppositions.

Gerard Sloyan's retelling of the Jesus story does not aim to supply this need. "The chapters that follow," he writes, "are going to look into who Jesus was and what he stood for in the eyes of those who first believed in him, which is another way of saying, from the viewpoints of the various evangelists." And he adds: "No attempt will be made to establish, along the way, what he 'really' said or did in his lifetime." As a result, the vast majority of the footnotes in the book refer to verses in the New Testament, while those that do not, refer to the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic texts, the Dead Sea scrolls and the Koran.

The Jewish setting of the life of Jesus plays a central role. Sloyan emphasizes repeatedly that Jesus was a Jew and must be understood

as one. But he goes beyond this point. The Jewishness of Jesus expresses itself in his relation to the land because "the Jewish people as a whole and Jesus in particular cannot be understood apart from it." The holiness of the land is derived from God who had deeded the land to the people of Israel as long as they would abide by the contract that had been drawn up between God and them. Sloyan sees Jesus not only as a resident of this land, but also caught up in the political tensions that permeated it, and which, not long after Jesus' death, would lead to the great rebellion that put an end to Jewish autonomy for many centuries.

Once the Jewishness of Jesus is emphasized — and it cannot be deemphasized without seriously distorting the gospels — the tension between Jesus and the Jewish currents of his day becomes a problem. What exactly was the root of that tension? Did the evangelists see Jesus as founding a new religion or is the element of continuity too great for any such venture? Because Sloyan specifically refuses to penetrate behind the gospels so as to separate the views of the evangelists from those of Jesus, he does not often notice editorial comments that may not correspond to Jesus' own views. Nevertheless, from time to time he cannot resist making such judgments, as he does in the case of the gospel of John which, he concludes, "contains some soliloquies that it calls the speech of Jesus, written in their entirety by the author." Still, those who seek a Jewish Jesus whose anti-Jewish utterances are the inventions of the evangelists will not find much comfort in this book. Curiously enough, the critical issue turns out to be the Trinity, hardly very explicit in the gospels.

Jesus' attitude to the Torah receives almost no attention in this book. The reason is not difficult to

find. Sloyan's *Is This the End of the Law?* (Westminster, 1978) is devoted to just this issue and that is probably the reason why this work does not deal with it. In the earlier book, the author insists that

It cannot be held, on any reading of the difference that Jesus made, that a divinely revealed Law lost all binding force at a certain point in history. (He concludes): To claim that Christianity derives from the Hebrew revelation is to see the election, covenant, promises, and Law of the Jews as permanently valid. No service can be done to God by declaring his work completed by the Christian revelation which has as its result the destruction or negation of the Hebrew revelation. Christ is the end of the Law as its completion, but not as its abrogation.

If "completion" implies the continuing obligation of Jews to live in accordance with the Torah, then one of the two basic issues outstanding between Judaism and Christianity is solved.

The other is the Christian trinity. Whatever other differences divide the two faiths, the teaching of the trinity is the most serious. Many church historians are convinced that the trinity is a much later development with very little support in the gospels. How does Sloyan stand on the question?

He understands the magnitude of the problem. "For if there is one betrayal of the spirit of Jesus that is most deeply resented," he writes, "it is the church's promotion of him to membership in the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Sloyan adds: "The followers of Jesus at the start were firmly Jewish. The least hint of a plurality of gods would have been as repulsive to them as to any Jew."

"Except for a few hints at philosophical vocabulary to describe the providential plan," he writes, "the New Testament writers cared only for what God had done for humanity in time. What he was like in him-

self did not engage them." After determining that "the Greek Christians and their Latin counterparts had to know how things were with God," he adds: "Not surprisingly, they came to know." Am I wrong in detecting a tone of sarcasm?

Sloyan believes that all human speech about God is metaphorical. Keeping this limitation in mind, he says that in Jesus "a man was so intimately united with deity that a unique claim can be made for him," and that in him "there was a man, they said, to whom the infinite God was more intensely present than to any other." Nevertheless, "there can be no question of a literally numerical three, any more than that God is male." He concludes:

The Christian church has much work undone that lies ahead. It must expound the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in a way comprehensible to the Jew and the Muslim, neither of whom thinks like a Greek or a Roman.

It is this undone work that is beginning to get done in this book. Sloyan does not offer a full-blown formulation of the trinity which is acceptable to Jews. It would be foolish to expect that. Instead, he struggles with the Jewishness of Jesus and understands the need to formulate the current faith of the Church in a way more faithful to the event that was Jesus. It has never been easy to bridge the gap between the Nazarene Jew and high Christology. To the extent that the focus is on Jesus as "a life in its setting," contact is reestablished with the reality of that life. When that is done, some degree of reconciliation with Judaism becomes inevitable. Sloyan's book is a significant contribution to that goal.

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How the Rabbis Thought

Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth. Ed. by JUDAH NADICH. Philadelphia, Pa. The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983. 477 pp., \$25.00.

Reviewed by NORMAN J. COHEN

ALMOST seventy-five years ago, the Jewish Publication Society of America published Louis Ginzberg's multi-volumed work, *The Legends of the Jews*. This widely used and thorough collection of aggadic material on the stories and personages of the Bible has enabled both students of Rabbinics and lay people to immerse themselves in the world of *Aggadah* and to gain a better understanding of the midrashic process and the mindset of the Rabbis. At the same time, the two volumes of Ginzberg's *Notes to The Legends*, which reflect the editor's scholarly acumen and breadth of knowledge, have been an invaluable source for scholars as well.

Now a sequel to Ginzberg's monumental work, also published by J.P.S., has appeared. Judah Nadich's *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth* is an anthology which covers the period of the return from Exile up to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The book is divided into nine parts of unequal length, seven of which are more or less historical units — The Persian Period, The Greek Period, The Hasmonean Period, The Great Assembly and the Sanhedrin, The Early Sages, The First Generation of Tannaim and The Last Years of the Second Commonwealth. The only exceptions are the sections on the Apocrypha (Part IV) and the Second Temple (Part V).

In evaluating such a volume, one must be aware of the very formidable problems inherent in such an effort. In the case of *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth*, the dif-

ficulties are underscored because of the obvious comparison and contrast with *The Legends of the Jews*. First, like most anthologies, Nadich's text frequently seems choppy, lacking adequate transitions amongst the sources quoted. Though his intention is "to produce a continuous narrative" by combining sources (p. xv), traditions seem "sewn together" and, on occasion, even repeated. In contrast to Ginzberg, Nadich does not succeed in utilizing the built-in chronological development to insure the flow of material.

A second problem is that while Ginzberg incorporated an abundance of traditions concerning particular biblical personalities and events (and even in the case of *The Legends* one can quarrel about the appropriateness of some of the material included or excluded), Nadich is much more selective. Not only does he ignore so much excellent material that the work occasionally seems sparse, but some of the traditions included are not very substantive. For example, only one passage, drawn from *Eicha Rabbati* 1:6, and illustrating the concept of *Shekhinta Ba-galuta* (God's presence in Exile), is included in the final section, "After the Destruction" (p. 363). However, there are many other similar traditions extant, and some of them might even be more poignant since they refer directly to the exile after the destruction of the Second Temple, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Massekhta de-Pisha, parashah* 14; *Sifrei Bamidbar, pisqa'ot* 84 and 161; P.T. *Ta'anit* 64a; *Bamidbar Rabbah* 7:10 and *Yalqut Shim'oni* 1:210 and 730/1.

A third area of concern regarding Nadich's work is the scholarly material included in the Introduction and Notes, as well as the occasional text explanations added. Some of his views on the development of Midrashic Literature and the redaction of individual texts

are the product of an earlier generation of scholars, and, therefore, are somewhat faulty. Thus, the *Pesiqta Rabbati* is dated 845 C.E., based upon a late interpolation in the first *pisqa* (p. xiv), but the work is clearly a late 6th-early 7th century compilation. Generalizations such as "aggadic material may be traced to pre-talmudic times, to the time of the scribes" (xiii) are illustrations of notions which have been called into question by recent scholarship. In addition, unlike Ginzberg's *Notes to The Legends*, this volume suffers from a paucity of lower and higher critical material involving the use of manuscripts, literary structural analysis, comparative literature, a sense of historical context and the like. All too often Nadich unjustifiably assumes the historicity of attributions and sources, and at the same time does not always provide the reader with sufficient explanatory material to insure his understanding of the passages cited. For example, the meagre material attributed to the Schools of Hillel and Shammai which is included in this volume (only eight traditions covering pages 233-235) is not treated critically at all in the Notes (pp. 278-79). Nadich does not set it into a wider historical framework, nor does he assist the reader in understanding the specific concerns in each of the passages.

Yet, any comparison between the works of Nadich and Ginzberg is probably unfair. *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth* is clearly a selective anthology intended for the lay reader, while *The Legends of the Jews* is a more comprehensive work meant for a scholarly audience as well, as reflected in its four volumes of text, two volumes of Notes and one volume Index.

Nevertheless, when one compares the two anthologies, many of the very positive aspects of Nadich's recently published volume

become evident. Like *The Legends*, it draws from a wide range of sources, and reflects the editor's extensive research and comparison of parallel versions. Generally, his choice of texts is well-founded, since, unlike Ginzberg, he is not locked into presenting the later, more embellished parallels. Nadich's use of sources and presentation of material is also quite effective. The texts quoted are highly readable because he occasionally changes language, paraphrases, cutting out irrelevant material, fills in lacunae in narrative development and deftly blends parallel versions (which are mentioned in the Notes). These changes, made for the sake of clarity, usually enhance the impact of the text material. Additionally, the notes sometimes do contain helpful explanations of exegesis and word plays, important historical background, discussion of related secondary scholarship and key bibliography.

Finally, mention should be made of the editor's supplements, which add to the quality of the book. The Bibliography, Name and Place Index, Subject Index, and list of Passages Cited all increase its usefulness.

Considering the severe obstacles faced in producing an anthology of this kind, *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth* should be assessed favorably. The editor succeeds in his expressed attempt to provide the lay person with a sense of richness of the *Aggadah*, from which we can learn much about the Rabbis and their beliefs and ideals, hopes and dreams, suffering and comforts, as well as their attitudes toward specific historic personalities and events. In so doing, he has given us another key for entering the world and mindset of the Rabbis, and being touched by their wisdom and insights.

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After the Dark — Into the Light?

Long Night's Journey Into Day. By A. ROY ECKARDT, with ALICE ECKARDT. Detroit. Wayne State University Press, 1982. 206 pp., \$16.50.

Jews and Christians After the Holocaust. Ed. by ABRAHAM J. PECK. Philadelphia. Fortress Press, 1982. xvi + 111 pp., \$8.95.

Reviewed by FRANKLIN H. LITTELL

FOR many decades A. Roy Eckardt has devoted himself to research, reflection and writing on the problematic of Christian/Jewish relations. In recent years he has co-authored books and articles with his wife Alice — also a professor at Lehigh University. The critical issue is how Christians view Jewish survival — with regret or thanksgiving. There are two epoch-making events of recent history which test the Christians — the Holocaust and a restored Israel. The Eckardts are among the vanguard of Christian thinkers who have been turning the churches away from the teaching of contempt toward reconciliation and amity.

On a thinking Christian's approach to a restored Israel, the Eckardts' *Encounter with Israel* (1970) is still without equal. *Long Night's Journey Into Day* reaches a high point in interpreting the Holocaust as a critical confrontation for Christian theology. The book, incidentally, is aesthetically also a high point, beautifully set and bound by Wayne State University Press — noteworthy in a season of carelessly edited, poorly designed and slovenly produced pot-boilers. Spiritually and intellectually, too, the book is a high point — dealing vigorously and creatively with the key theological issues and most important writings on the frontier of Christianity's major credibility crisis. One does

not have to agree with all of the Eckardts' positions — as for example, the need to recognize the existence of anti-Semitism in the New Testament or the reconstruction of the doctrines of the Resurrection and Christology — to appreciate the moral earnestness and intellectual acumen with which they wrestle with problems that most Christians still avoid.

Jews and Christians After the Holocaust, an anthology of worth in itself, is also a sign of how far we have come in Christian/Jewish theological dialogue in the last dozen years. The first conference to bring Jewish and Christian thinkers together on the theme of the Holocaust and related issues was held at Wayne State University in 1970. This was the first in an annual series of Scholars' Conferences on the assault of Nazism upon the Jewish people and the Christians who kept their promises (theme: *Kirchenkampf* and *Shoah*). In the last few years a number of good one-time conferences have been held, with an emerging literary genre: anthologies of papers by Jewish and Christian scholars on the Holocaust as a crisis in both faiths.

Dr. Abraham J. Peck here presents one of the best of its kind, deriving from a symposium sponsored by Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, in November of 1980. They represent first-rate current thinking by some of the most active leaders in the reconstruction of Jewish and Christian teaching after Auschwitz — among them Yaffa Eliach, Rosemary Ruether, John Conway, Irving Greenberg. The symposium host, President Alfred Gottschalk (a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council and himself a survivor), provides a moving introduction to the problematic and a fitting benedictory to the project.

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On Zweig at his Centennial

Stefan Zweig — The World of Yesterday's Humanist Today. Proceedings of the Stefan Zweig Symposium. Edited by MARION SONNENFELD. Albany, New York. State University of New York Press, 1983. 357 pp., \$50.00.

Reviewed by ALFRED WOLF

TO judge by the published record, the Zweig Symposium held at State University of New York at Fredonia, March 30 to April 2, 1981, combined the characteristics of a centennial acclamation with those of a commemorative wake. It was the occasion for thoughtful and grateful appreciation of Zweig's contributions to world literature, his great success during his lifetime, and his renewed popularity. (New editions and reprints of his works in the original and in translations numbering in the hundreds of thousands of copies have been published in recent years.) It also called for cold and careful analysis of his shortcomings and failures. Throughout the published proceedings of the conference one can hear the unasked question: Was Zweig only a witness to a world irrevocably gone or is he still the prophet of a possible — if not irresistible — tomorrow?

The thirty-one papers (plus Symposium schedule and index) of varying length, perspective and quality touch on most aspects of Zweig's life work. They are arranged in topical groups without claim to be overly systematic, let alone exhaustive.

George Iggers sets the theme for the volume in his "Introductory Observations" about this son of Vienna who was also a European and a Citizen of the World: "Although this world has now passed out of existence, its ideals of rationality and humanity continue to

have validity" (p. 1).

Several of the writers seem to question this thesis. They convey the feeling that Zweig, born and raised in the nineteenth century, was out of place even in the first half of the twentieth. He is described as "a man of old Austria in its last decades" who actually hoped that violence and evil might be overcome "in a matter of decades" (pp. 10, 11). Even though he "sensed the dangers of the ivory tower" (p. 18), Zweig is adjudged as being distant from politics and social concerns, unaware of currents of anti-intellectualism and irrationalism, insensitive to the dangers inherent in either Soviet Communism or Italian Fascism, unaware even of the anti-Semitism surfacing in the Habsburg monarchy and of the rising threat of Hitler in the Weimar republic.

Others acclaim Zweig as a transmitter of a humanism which is not abstract but is embodied in the cultural tradition of the European world since Erasmus. Perhaps it is the centrality of the individual in nearly all his writings which is reclaiming a place for Zweig today.

The individual occupies center stage in most of Zweig's writings, including his interpretation of history.

In Zweig's view, the important moves in the world are made by outstanding individuals who perform the fateful acts at the right moment, under their lucky stars. Great personalities . . . or workers of destiny stand out in bold relief. It is this dramatic view . . . that produced his works about individuals, particularly those whose full personalities unfolded in suffering and defeat" (Wilma Iggers, p. 16).

Those who look for a complete, well-balanced picture of the author's life and works will not find it in the record of the Symposium. Instead, they will find a collage, many-layered in some places, thin in some, empty in others. Three

papers deal with Zweig and France, especially with his struggle for Pan-European unity with Romain Rolland and his friendship with Georges Duhamel. Zweig's unhappy experience as an expatriate commands two treatments under the heading "Zweig the Emigrant" and five more under "Zweig in Brazil," the latter full of questions surrounding his suicide.

Under the title "Zweig's Interpretation of History," Stephen Howard Garrin, utilizing primarily *Sternstunden der Menschheit*, illustrates the strong moralistic and psychological elements in Zweig's historical writings, while Lionel B. Steiman delights in showing factual and attitudinal contradictions in the author's works, his preference for "the element of personal tragedy" rather than "the historical," in short, his lack of interest in writing "academic history" (p. 137).

In spite of the prominence of biography among Zweig's most widely read works, no section of this volume is devoted to this topic. Of the six presentations under the title "Zweig, the Humanizer in Literature," three deal with his novellas, two with his dramatic works and only one with his "Big Balzac."

What should attract members of this magazine to the Proceedings of the Symposium is the extensive treatment of Zweig, the Jew. Many of the presentors refer to the impact of Zweig's Jewish identity on his attitudes, his writings and, particularly, his fate. "Zweig the Correspondent," for instance, deals exclusively with letters between two Jewish expatriates: Zweig and Emil Ludwig. Editha Neumann, speaking of the writer as "A Wanderer Between Two Worlds," and Rosi Cohen, treating emigration as "A Contributing Factor to Stefan Zweig's Suicide" speculate: To what extent was Stefan's and Lotte's self-destruction the

outcome of depression, despair, homesickness, a sense of defeat and hence a victory for Hitler, though six thousand miles from the closest concentration camp? And to what extent was it conditioned by a character trait foreshadowed by plot elements of several novellas and short stories and by remarks made as early as his fiftieth birthday, in 1931?

The fifty-four page section on "Zweig and Judaism" is of special interest. Leo Spitzer furnishes an excellent genealogical study of the Zweigs through six generations from 1750 to 1880. He traces the family's journey from humble beginnings into middle class affluence, from the Jewish ghetto into the *haute bourgeoisie*, from the subordination of the merely tolerated to the "world of security" of the comfortable burgher. The Zweigs were not untypical of Jewish families in Austria-Hungary and Germany. They lived in an affluent neighborhood, though they were not yet accepted socially, could communicate easily with non-Jewish neighbors but had not experienced intermarriage before Stefan's generation.

Klara Carmely, treating "The Ideal of Eternal Homelessness," touches both the glory and the tragedy of Stefan's creative life when she observes: "To be able to perceive himself as a citizen of the world was indispensable for his own experience" (p. 111). Zweig "never regarded his Judaism as a flaw or hateful burden" (p. 112), nor did it "excite" or "torment" him and "very few of his works deal with Jewish themes." He felt ambivalent toward Zionism. While he admired Herzl, he viewed the "idea of the Jews becoming a nation like any other, complete with flags, canons and medals as a dangerous regression and a betrayal of their highest mission" (p. 115).

That mission, for Zweig, was

made possible by the fact that the Jewish people "have no ties to any single country, to any one language, to communal customs and ways, but that they have only a spiritual home and are therefore international in the truest sense of the word" (p. 114). Thus, his Judaism became the undergirding of his pan-Europeanism, his self-image as a citizen of the world and, in his *Jeremias*, for his pacifism.

While Carmely is satisfied with showing how Zweig had to adjust his Pollyanna-like view of Jewish faith and destiny under the impact of Nazism, Leon Botstein actually enters into argument with the Symposium's honoree. The title of his paper, "Stefan Zweig and the Illusion of the Jewish European," signals the attitude motivating the otherwise excellent paper. Botstein focuses on the negative elements of Zweig's relationship to Jews and Judaism, his highly assimilated home, his insufficient religious training, his aversion to Jewish nationalism, his prejudice toward East European Jewish masses and his opposition to Jewish participation in European politics (p. 96). He denigrates Zweig's biographies as "psychological fiction" (p. 92), accuses him of romanticizing and idealizing the Vienna of his birth, of ignoring social conflict, poverty and anti-Semitism simply because his parents arrived in Vienna after having achieved affluence (p. 91). In Botstein's opinion, Zweig held "an entirely fictitious view of politics and history." His pacifism rested on "avoidance rather than a recognition of reality," his "naive hopefulness" on "his avoidance of history in its details and patterns" (p. 95). Zweig's complex relationship with Richard Strauss (analyzed in some detail in two other papers of the Symposium) is characterized here sweepingly as failure "to behave with pride as a Jew" (p. 98). While his treatment of the

prophet Jeremiah may over-emphasize the universal elements in the Prophet's utterances, in Botstein's view it "defended the myth of a Judeo-Christian tradition and reached for a Judeo-Christian-pagan synthesis" (p. 94).

Perhaps Botstein felt that his criticism of Zweig from the vantage of 1981 might sound like the work of a Monday morning quarterback. Searching for allies among Zweig's contemporaries, he found and quotes Karl Kraus who, Botstein states, "unmasked Zweig much like the Emperor without clothes" (p. 106). What he fails to reveal is that Kraus, a convert from Judaism, was a satirist who used his acid pen to mock Judaism and Jews, especially Zionists and liberals, who blamed Jews for being the cause of anti-Semitism, and who had nothing to say against Nazism until Hitler attacked Austria (*Encyclopaedia Judaica* vol. 10, p. 1243).

Harry Zohn, in his concluding address, gives us a more balanced view of our centenarian both as a Jew and as a humanist. He states that Zweig "interpreted his Judaism rather wilfully as offering him an opportunity to be a citizen of the world" (p. 308). His ultimate appraisal is:

While Stefan Zweig was, alas, a physician who could not heal himself, his undogmatic and unideological humanism is eminently relevant to our age. . . . Some things that Zweig worked for tirelessly and that seemed utopian during his lifetime . . . are actualities today. . . . Zweig's boundless faith in mankind can still sustain us, and his pioneering work in behalf of a brotherly world without boundaries is still capable of inspiring us (pp. 312-13).

ALFRED WOLF is rabbi at the Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Los Angeles and has taught at the University of Southern California, Loyola Marymount University of L.A. and HUC-JIR, California campus.

BOOKS RECEIVED

From June through August 1984

Listing of a book does not preclude its being reviewed in a subsequent issue of JUDAISM

Alphabet

Moziani, Eliyahu. *Torah des Alphabets: Rekonstruktion des 2 Tafeln von Moses im Ur-Alphabet*. Germany: Bahlschem Verlag Herborn, 1984. 152 pp.

American Jewish Life

Bernstein, Philip. *To Dwell in Unity*. The Jewish Federation Movement in America Since 1960. Philadelphia, Pa.: The Jewish Publication Society, 1984. xv + 394 pp., \$19.95.

Kramer, Daniel Zvi. *The Day schools and Torah uMesorah*. The Seeding of Traditional Judaism in America. New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1984. xvii + 211 pp., \$14.95.

Bible

Boling, Robert G. and G. Ernest Wright. *Joshua: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1982. xvii + 580 pp., \$14.00.

Clifford, Richard J. *Fair Spoken and Persuading*. An Interpretation of Second Isaiah. New York: Paulist Press, 1984. 202 pp., \$8.95 (paper).

Harris, Stephen L. *Understanding the Bible: A Reader's Guide and Reference*. Palo Alto, Ca.: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1980. xi + 391 pp., \$9.95 (paper).

Wildavsky, Aaron. *The Nursing Father: Moses as a Political Leader*. University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1984. xi + 262 pp., \$11.95 (paper).

Christianity

Allegro, John M. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1984. 252 pp., \$18.95.

Brown, Raymond G. *The Churches The Apostles Left Behind*. New York: Paulist Press, 1984. 156 pp., \$8.95.

Friedman, Saul S. *The Oberammergau Passion Play: A Lance Against Civilization*. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984. xxvii + 270 pp., \$22.95.

Monti, Joseph E. *Who Do You Say That I Am? The Christian Understanding of Christ and Antisemitism*. Rawley, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1984. vii + 98 pp., \$3.95 (paper).

European Jewry

Halperin J. et G. Levitte, eds. *Israel, Le judaïsme et L'Europe*. Paris: Gallimard, 1984. 375 pp.

Rosenblit, Marsha L. *The Jews of Vienna 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of N.Y. Press, 1983. xvii + 284 pp., \$12.95 (paper), \$39.50 (cloth).

von Leyden, Wolfgang. *Growing Up Under the Weimar Republic*. Reflections on Personal Identity and the Past. New York: Vantage Press, 1984. xvii + 164 pp., \$12.95.

Feminism

Bulkin, Elly, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith. *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism*. New York: Long Haul Press, 1984. 233 pp., \$7.95 (paper).

Schneider, Susan Weidman. *Jewish and Female*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984. 640 pp., \$19.95.

Fiction

Bermant, Chaim. *The House of Women*. New York: Charter Books, 1984. 293 pp., \$3.50 (paper).

Birmingham, Stephen. *The Auerbach Will*. New York: Berkley Books, 1984. 418 pp., \$3.95 (paper).

Darrid, William. *Solomon Moon*. New York: Villard Books, 1984. 438 pp., \$15.95.

Fast, Howard. *The Outsider*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1984. 311 pp., \$15.95.

Hastings, Michael. *The Spy in Winter*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1984. 264 pp., \$14.95.

Morton, Frederic. *The Forever Street*. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 447 pp., \$16.95.

Romm, J. Leonard. *The Swastika on the Synagogue Door*. Chappaqua, N.Y.: Rossel Books, 1984. 149 pp., \$6.95 (paper).

Uris, Leon. *The Haj*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1984. 566 pp., \$17.95.

History

Blumenthal, David R., ed. *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*. Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1984. 176 pp., \$14.95 (paper).

Levine, Lee I., ed. *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*. Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1982. 199 pp., \$24.00.

Meyers, E.M., and J.E. Strange. *Les Rabbins et les premiers chretiens*. Archeologie et Histoire. Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1984. 232 pp. (paper).

Neusner, Jacob. *Messiah in Context: Israel's History and Destiny in Formative Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. xxvii + 259 pp., \$26.95.

Rubin, Gershon. *The Hebrew Saga*. New York: The Philosophical Library, 1984. 204 pp., \$15.00.

Holocaust

- Fein, Helen. *Accounting for Genocide*. National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984. xxi + 468 pp., \$13.95 (paper).
- Luel, Steven A. and Paul Marrus. *Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Holocaust*. New York: KTAV, 1984. 239 pp., \$20.00.
- Posmantier, Harry. *The Last of the Numbered Men: A Memoir of the Holocaust*. New York: Vantage Press, 1984. xix + 180 pp., \$12.95.
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- Shamir, Maxim and Gabriel. *The Story of Israel in Stamps*. North Hollywood, Ca.: Wilshire Book Co., 75 pp., \$1.00 (paper).

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- Roseman, Kenneth. *The Melting Pot*. An Adventure in New York. New York: UAHC, 1984. 130 pp., \$6.95 (paper).

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- Hebrew Union College Annual*. Vol. LIV. Cincinnati, Ohio: HUC-JIR, 1984, 340 pp.
- Hinnells, John R. *The Facts on File Dictionary of Religions*. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984. 550 pp., \$24.95.
- Tanenbaum, Marc H., Marvin R. Wilson, and A. James Rudin, eds. *Evangelicals and Jews in an Age of Pluralism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984. 285 pp., \$9.95 (paper).
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- Neusner, Jacob. *Invitation to the Talmud*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. xxxi + 359 pp., \$18.95.

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Lightstone, Jack N. *The Commerce of the Sacred. Mediation of the Divine Among Jews in the Graeco-Roman Diaspora.* Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1984. 217 pp., \$18.75 (paper).

Moltmann, Jürgen. *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics.* tr. w/an introduction by M. Douglas Meeks. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. xiv + 225 pp.

Wyschogrod, Michael. *The Body of Faith.* New York: The Seabury Press, 1984. xviii + 265 pp.

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